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DAYS OF YORE

IN TWO VOLUMES

ALEXANDER STRAHAN, PUBLISHER

LONDON 148 Strand

NEW YORK 139 Grand Street

DAYS OF YORE

BY ~~SARAH TYTLER~~

AUTHOR OF 'CITOYENNE JACQUELINE.'

presented
H. K. C. C. C.
VOL. I.



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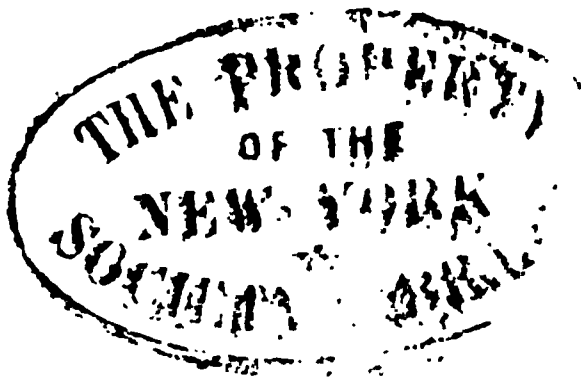
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I.

PEEPS INTO ANTIQUITY.



SAINT MARGARET.

PRESBYTERIAN Scotland has one saint in the calendar for whom she still cherishes some reverent love. Unlike most saints, this one has few ignorant, unlettered votaries, unless it may be in her peculiar locality, and among a sprinkling of young Catholic girls, who lay flowers on her altar and neglect the study of her life, in one of the convents or conventual schools in the kingdom. To the scholar she only exists in the record of her confessor, Turgot. But to the lover of popular stories and folk-lore, Saint Margaret (Queen Margaret) is a great presence. *With her sweet eyes, her auburn hair, her learning,*

her sorrows, her fasts and vigils, and her wifely love, she lives in tradition among the stern covenanting people of Scotland. How she came a wanderer to the court of the Cean Mohr, how she lived a saint in the midst of its barbaric splendour, and how she proved herself a brave, patient, fond wife, under the faint, sickly odour of her sanctity, may be worth telling, even in these bustling times.

I.—THE WANDERER.

It is far, far back, in the days of vikings, bards, mailed knights, and veiled ladies. The first Crusade has not yet started for the East, and the black Danes hover in crowds on every coast in Western Europe. Norman William has just landed in Saxon England, and his beaked boats are scuttled in the Channel; Sanguelac has just been fought and Harold slain, and the banner of the White Horse pulled down. Saxon thane and yeoman are fain to flee to friendly Scotland, while Matilda of Flanders and her women sit weaving the famous Bayeux tapestry. Every fresh thread *is but another leaf in the garland of fierce William,*

whose violence Matilda knows to her cost. But he is hers now, and, like other discreet souls, she bends her proud spirit to the yoke, and even gets to be proud of William's iron hardness, just as the fool Lady Hameline vaunts of her wild boar of Ardennes.

On the broad Frith of Forth (called then Scotwater), whose whales' tongues were carefully preserved as dainty bits for Scotland's kings, there rode, under stress of weather, a boat which might well have drawn attention. Its gilded sides rose like walls, its head and stern were like the gables of a house, while its clumsy sails contended with its banks of oars. It was overcrowded with angry, mournful, weary men and women. It had run into the bay, named afterwards St. Margaret's Hope, and had cast anchor off the Binks, or low-lying rocks, which, as a background to a boat with a queen, and three sea-mews hovering overhead, were in days long after to flourish in the burghal seal of Dunfermline.

The widow of the son of Edmund Ironside, her son Edgar Atheling, the Saxon heir of England, *and his sisters Margaret and Catherine, with*

their train, were thus arrested on their way to the forests and vineyards of Hungary, the widow's native home.

Most of the company were unlike the great Apostle in all save one thing. They had been in perils by land and by sea ; in danger oft, and in troubles many. They had escaped from the victorious Normans on the great field where William was to build his abbey, to atone for the slaughter of a multitude of faithful men. They had been flying hither and thither, skulking in the marshes about Ely, or lying in the wilds of Northumberland. At last they had embarked on this treacherous sea, which, in place of bearing them across to Germany, had cast them, like dishonoured waifs, on the coast of this poor rough little Scotland. But the waves might have been more unkind. Scotland was at least friendly under Malcolm, who had been himself a fugitive, and educated under the protection of Edward the Confessor, ere he returned to avenge the murder of Duncan, his father, and to reign in his father's seat.

Those poor Saxon aldermen and franklins—with

their long cloaks, long beards, and heavy dulness of aspect, at which the Normans laughed so unmercifully, as if beaten men could be buoyant or witty, unless, indeed, they were Frenchmen—had not much counsel to give their superiors, the weary Agathe, the weak Edgar, the sick Catherine, the dauntless Margaret. But, after some consultation, it was determined to send an embassy to Malcolm, who was reported to be at Dunfermline, to entreat his hospitality and aid. They would ask him to nourish them during the storm, and to speed them on their voyage when the blast had blown by. The Lady Margaret offered to be the bearer of the credentials and the message. Margaret perhaps had reasons of her own for urging that she might be permitted to go and treat with the potentate.

It must be understood also that the Queen's Ferry, named by her descendants after royal Margaret, is no great distance from the tower by the winding stream. Margaret might go and come without any difficulty, under the escort of Ambrose, Adhelm, or Dunstan, reverent fathers *who accompanied and blessed the expedition.*

Moreover, necessity laughs at formalities. Margaret bore down opposition, and set out on her adventure. After long walking by the woods of Pitreavie, she at length approached Dunfermline.

On she speeds in her fine linen tunic and furred mantle with couvrechief and veil, her bronze hair flowing full length and reaching down to her girdle, but confined in two broad full plaits, and thrown forward over her shoulders. Foot-sore and trembling at the heart, like any mean woman, she seats herself on the stone which for eight hundred years has borne her name. To her last day she loved to seek out this stone, and on her after progresses to Edinburgh, she often held there her mid-day meal. Royal Margaret, with her tawny hair and her eyes clear, cold, in their deep dark grey, and her wonderful energy, wisdom, and purity, was, indeed, a marvel of womankind. Her companions rest at a respectful distance. Even Father Ambrose whom she favours in her love of all those who preach and teach righteousness, scarcely advances a step nearer than the others. Margaret sits

in queenly solitude. Could such as Margaret, indeed, be other than solitary?

What does Margaret dream of as she gazes on the woodlands around her? The greater portion of the land is hunting-ground, as it is in that Hungary to which she is bound: the oak and beech are red from the touch of autumn's sharp fingers, and the leaves are swiftly swirled in eddies about her feet. Does she look back longingly to England and the sway of the royal Monk, whose bequest had drenched his country with blood, and was now driving her into exile? Or does she glance forward at the towering Carpathians and that swift Danube by which another canonized queen bears her crown of thorns? Does she even dimly foresee that she will yet triumph and rule, not only in life, but in death? Does she read of a destiny, difficult in its high happiness and prosperity; of her wedding a noble husband, of her cradling six stout sons, or of the omens pointing also to cold flinty rocks—the bread and the water, the scourge for the rich and the great, and the oil and the wine for *the poor*? Does she anticipate with that strange

prescience given to pure minds that her spirit will pass away amidst bloody strife, contention, and terrible wrong, such as overshadowed her birth, or that from the dust before the altar in the wattled church of Dunfermline, which in later days shall rise into a solemn abbey, more than one royal race will claim to have its source?

Or does Margaret with her sandalled foot fashion the fallen leaves into some fantastic pattern, and recall the last occasion on which she met the Cean Mohr—when the northern chief did homage to her beauty and her grandeur of soul, and when she slighted the half-tamed barbarian? Or has she misgivings that now the day of reckoning has come, and that her helpless kindred will suffer for her error? Or does Margaret—wise woman—cast aside all such distracting reflections and refresh herself with the changing hues of the forest verdure, the great sweeps of the sky—now heavenly in its peaceful blue, now cumbered with labouring clouds?

Whatever her meditations, Margaret does not long delay her errand. Margaret never yet *delayed* when effort was to be made or penalty

endured. "Father Ambrose, we must hasten and hie us home ere set of sun—home!" Margaret took back the word and dwelt on it with a touch of irony. "Yet we can make a home even on ship-board, as the curlew skims on the foaming water; only my mother and Catherine and poor Edgar refuse to mate with the curlew so long as the meanest hut stands on solid ground."

Far on in the day they reach the fair flat summit of the hill in the glen of Pittencrieff, on which Malcolm has built his grey tower. Happily for them there is Malcolm, just returned from the chase, alighting among a throng of courtiers.

Malcolm is no longer the young lad dazed and demented by his father's murder. Thirteen good years have elapsed since he returned to meet the usurper, when the ghost-ridden man was goaded into the last flash of manhood and valour. A contrast, indeed, is there between the boy Malcolm who flees from Macbeth and leans upon Macduff, and this big mature Cean Mohr, who would flee from no earthly evil, and who leans upon nought but his own good sword and his *God*. *Malcolm* has won the ripe renown of his

hot fiery temper, and his large, placable, bountiful heart.

Matthew of Westminster relates an anecdote about Malcolm and the foundation of his favourite tower in the glen of Pittencrieff, when no palace as yet stood there, and the abbey itself was but a wooden shed. The king had learned by sure information that one of his principal nobles was plotting his death. He arranged a hunting feast, summoned the offender, and planned that they two should be left alone on this little clear mound. There he charged the noble with his treason, and drawing his sword, called upon him to come on "body to body," and fight him like a man, where there was none to interfere between them; whereupon the villain flung himself down, and shed bitter but wholesome tears at the king's feet, avowed his repentance, and swore to prove henceforth his most loyal devoted servant. And the good king assured him of his hearty forgiveness, and related to no man what had been said and done betwixt them. Each kept his frank word, and no wonder Malcolm conceived a fondness for *the spot* with its many attractions—the circling

stream and the tall trees in the gully below, under which the deer were wont to couch; and so he built there his hunting tower.

Malcolm had just been apprised of the arrival of the "Dragon" and its crew in the bay at Inverkeithing. Little more than a year ago, when he was south about Newcastle, whither he had come with sword and shield, and bill and bow, to defend the cause of the tottering House of Cerdic, he encountered Lady Margaret, and entered the lists as an urgent suitor for her hand. Malcolm was a rough, unlettered soldier. His youthful years had been spent in Edward's court, where the Romance language of the Norman courtiers, and the penitential psalms of the monkish king, bearing down the homely, hardy Saxon nature, ill served to obliterate his ghastly recollections of the early tragedy which drove him there, or to excite in him a taste for peaceful study. But though Malcolm could scarcely spell out a line in Saxon, British, or Latin, and though he scrawled his name vilely, he was a master in sport and in warfare. He drew a fine bow; he threw a falcon and brought *to the quarry*; he well stood the shock of

muscular antagonist, and he smote a desperate enemy hip and thigh. And then he had such an eye for greenery and venery, he could speedily run over the landscape and mark out tower and hamlet, mill and lochlet—an eye that could thoroughly scan man or beast, and pronounce skilfully upon either. A bold, generous, true man, ready and capable in his instinctive truthfulness; no wonder he was well beloved in his kingdom. Rare sovereigns have ruled in little Scotland—Robert the Deliverer, James the Poet, Mary the Queen of Beauty and of Tragedy; but none was ever obeyed with readier will and duty than Malcolm—the Cean Mohr, the Great Head, yet whose heart it was that obtained for him the surname bestowed on his sagacity.

Malcolm was no inflammable, hasty, blundering monarch, likely to elevate to his crown and throne a fair face, a shallow brain, or a cozening tongue. Half proud, half humble, he was conscious enough of his mental defects, and in his greatness he valued cultivation the more in others; and, above all, he loved to find in women the intelligence and *refinement* which he wanted. He had waited these

thirteen years without a queen and partner, not because he was fault-finding and arrogant, but because he had an honest sense of his dignity as a man and king, and would not wed unworthily. He had chanced upon Lady Margaret, had instantly chosen her, and had sought her with all the sincerity and force of his character; but Margaret would then have none of him. With all the fineness of her faculties, and their keenness through training, she yet had failed to see the beauty and force of Malcolm's character in his clumsy bluntness. She only noticed his uncouthness and his barrenness of all book knowledge; besides, Margaret had no great mind to marry. In the train of the Confessor there was an almost universal vocation to the cloister; and Margaret had early yearnings, deep communings, sublime visions. Her better angel caused her to hesitate, however. Mother, and sister, and brother needed to be upheld by her advice and consolation. Then, too, she loved freedom, and bright, beautiful nature, second only to study.

So Margaret and the Cean Mohr had parted, *scarcely expecting to meet again*. Stout, gallant,

and with a well-balanced mind, he could stand that sharp disappointment with the other crosses of his lot. None ever saw him blench. Perhaps even in the healthful, hardy nature, the rankling regret was beginning to die out, though the memory was still cherished. But Malcolm could wait, and he could work for his end too. He was no vain boy to be swallowed up with pique and spite. He forgave his cold, haughty mistress. Only the extinction of all hope could have completely deadened his affection. Hope stood at his right hand ; and even under the lingering mortification of her former refusal, he was eagerly counting the chances and calculating the best moves to obtain a reversal of the sentence, and crown Margaret as his queen in this tower of Dunfermline.

“ My lord,” remarked an observant friend, “ yonder comes a party from the English boat.” Malcolm cast a keen glance down the path. His eyes were never lack-lustre or dull. His brown cheek flushed ; he uncovered as he started forward : “ Lady Margaret, without palfrey or litter, by herself ; neither mother nor brother with her ! Now *this savours* of such sweet, calm, fearless conde-

scension as I may well fear. No matter, we will at least try if we cannot match her in courtesy."

Margaret in an instant recognised him among his escort, richly clad as he was. She did not swerve aside, though her cheek, as was its wont when agitated, grew white, and not maidenly red. The pupil of her eye dilated, and her delicate nostril quivered, as she said: "My lord, we were richer once than now we are, though our fortunes have never been great since the heathen Dane invaded Saxon England. I come as a beggar to claim alms of your Christian kindness and royal charity. We need victuals till the storm is over, lest we exhaust our supply; but the plainest and coarsest will suffice us. Ship-carpenters also we need to repair our damage, that we may sail with the first fair wind from this Scotwater, into which we have trespassed. Then we will row across the German Ocean to the Low Countries, and take horse for many weeks through friendly tracts, till at last we reach our mother Hungary." She would have knelt to him where he stood with a lowly obeisance, such as suited her situation and her petition.

“Nay,” he said, “Lady Margaret, my cousin—for I count kin with all of the race of Cerdic since they sheltered me in my adversity—you can never come as a beggar to me. Lady Margaret can never be anything but the sovereign and I the subject; for I never change relations. Madam, bethink you it is cruel to remind me that it is only because you are poorer than of yore that you claim my good will.” He spoke very gently, but with something of sarcasm, and Margaret looked wisely into his face expecting more to follow. He could not abide the supplicating glance; he took her hand with all friendship and respect. “Let us have no more idle formality. What will you have of me, Lady Margaret? Shall your kinsmen come up and join you and taste of my hunting fare? Shall the ladies of my nobles attend you? We will summon them on the moment. Will you return to the boat, and permit me to ride behind you? or mount the best bred gelding, and suffer me to lead the bridle rein? Our broken ways are not fit for women’s tender feet. Sumpter horses will follow with meat and ale, and mead and wine. I would they were more dainty for your sake; the

have only been prepared for men's rude appetites. I would I had books and plays to rightly entertain you, Lady Margaret; but you know my scant capacity, and you will take the will for the deed. Ask what you will, even to my crown and sceptre—they are yours to accept from my poor hand."

She bent her stately head, and trembled all over, smitten with his magnanimity, and in his quick ear she murmured low, "My Lord and King."

II.—THE SAINT.

The "Dragon" had long sailed with its precious freight from the Scotwater, but ere that day Margaret had been wedded to the Cean Mohr with all dignity and splendour, at the tower by the winding stream. Years had passed away, changes had come to the little hamlet which once clustered so simply round the King's Tower. Dunfermline, destined to join several interests, was growing fast. Malcolm and Margaret, impressed with the obligation David felt and Solomon fulfilled, were rearing the first stone ver-

sion of the grand abbey, and endowing its prior afresh. They were likewise building, in a still lovelier nook of Pittencrieff Den, that palace of Margaret's in which, long centuries after, the crone saw the mystic cloak flung over the cradle of Charles the Martyr, and where Elizabeth Queen of Hearts wielded her baby sceptre—the lightest she ever bore. Then was laid the foundation of those relics—thorn of Wallace, Bruce's sword and tomb, royal aumry and memories of Anne the royal milkmaid—which form the strangest confluence of picturesque reminiscences.

Margaret was now a wife and a mother, faithful and beloved. Some would say this might have sufficed her. As a woman it did suffice—for Margaret's ardent return of her husband's regard was well known. And it is told too, that when, in after times, they translated her bones and disposed them in the casket encrusted with precious stones provided for their reception by her grandson, the bones of Margaret miraculously caused the procession to halt dutifully until those of Malcolm were also diligently gathered and placed in the same chest; and when this had

been done they presented no further impediment to the march.

But Margaret had been instructed that penance and mortification, and lavish alms, and acts of devoted will, framed the way to heaven. Tenderly benevolent, as all generous natures must be, she was also inclined unconsciously to a sort of platonic philosophy, and this, wedded to the monasticism that had grown up in the atmosphere of Rome, produced peculiar results. Margaret trod that narrow road not weakly but with a stern bravery, as she had in other days borne her own burden, and gone to face Malcolm in his fortress. A horror and repugnance of self-indulgence had grown up in her. She had a burning zeal for God's service. She had a fear of herself and her own overflowing affections. She could not impoverish their objects, but she could stint herself: she could balk her own heart, she could famish it and scourge it, as, alas! she did sometimes famish and scourge her pure queenly body!

Margaret ate her pulse and drank her water, while *she* cooked Malcolm's favourite dishes and

served them with her own glad hands, as Isabella of Castile was fain to stitch for her Ferdinand. Malcolm slumbered soundly after his day's hard exercise, and Margaret would gently smooth down his pillow, and then turn her to the oratory, where the dim lamp burned, and the iron crucifix stood, and she would lay herself down at its foot, and tell her beads, and recall her sins, until the dim morning waked Malcolm to the cheery hunt. Then he would enter the oratory with hasty step and clouded brow, and lift Margaret up, cold, and stiff, and faint. He would then peevishly bid her pray more in moderation, and be saintly in proper season. And she would cry out in anguish at his transgression, till he was like to curse himself, thinking of the aves, the credos, and the shrifts the loving and unflinching wife would inflict on herself in secret to save him, the strong man, from the consequences of his hasty words.

Malcolm could have borne the loss of her company, for he was magnanimous. He could even have overlooked the disadvantage to the state in the king or queen not only being above the *world*, but living out of the world, thus encourag-

ing a state of mind which would readily put the vow before the altar in opposition to the profit of commerce, trade, or agriculture, or even of what seemed social weal. He even consented to alienate rich crown lands for the devout friars and sisters whom Margaret loved; and he listened patiently to prolix arguments with the followers of the Culdees in the royal presence. He smothered all his doubts in the obstinate conviction that his Margaret must be right. He even brought himself to witness his beautiful and learned Margaret in her hospital, and walked after her humbly, as of old, while she bound up the loathsome wounds, raised the fevered heads, and moistened the parched lips; and the tears gushed from his eyes as he knelt to her in her closet, and begged her to bless him, her unworthy husband.

But when Margaret introduced to Malcolm his young blooming daughter Maud—another Margaret, only untried and untroubled—with the novice's veil cumbering and shading, like widow's weeds, her open brow, then the much-enduring monarch strode up to the child, impetuously rent *the veil away, and wrathfully forbade, on pain of*

his lasting displeasure, that Maud should wear the gloomy badge. It was to him the token of the lengthening and broadening chilly shadow which was separating him from the bride of his fancy, the wife of his manhood—his beautiful Margaret and peerless queen. Margaret weeps and groans, Malcolm rages and storms. Angry frowns meet stately sullenness ; and alienation, opposite pursuits, violent extravagances, excess and remorse, tread swiftly on each other's heels.

Nothing but error and sorrow. Are such misunderstandings to be the end ? Malcolm's wholesome heart was changed to gall. He begins to doubt all goodness, to regard all religion as hypocrisy.

The Cean Mohr must surely have lent himself to mean and false councillors ere he could consent to dog Margaret's steps, gliding into secrecy. He must have fed his nature with doubt ere he could have sworn that no mortal could thus abstract herself from the living, breathing, rejoicing world, and continue carrying for ever the load of sin, mourning, and watching, and laying on herself *fresh punishments*, without some influence of earth

mingling with the stream of worship. He thought there was but a step bridging a frightful chasm between these false restraints and unhallowed licence ; for nature rebelled against such a regime, and, just to herself, broke out in foul sores. The convents and religious houses had seen it. The high places had been stained. But if he had been deceived, basely betrayed—woe to the day !

Mad with regret—the gnawing pangs of “rue” wasting his vitals—the King rose from his bed one dewy summer’s morning, and followed Margaret, whose footsteps through the gate were reported by the warden. Down the wooded ravine he went, and along a faintly worn footpath, such as might guide a constant lover to a daily tryst. Then he broke into a track which winded over the purple ground-ivy, and by the feathery bracken under the cream-coloured stems of the dark fir-trees. The birds were beginning their matins before the bells of the priory rang out from the round tower rising above the thatched roof. The cony, with lurching leaps, scoured over the tree roots, and the squirrel nimbly scampered up the branches. The blue *mist rolled from the hills of Cleish*, but in Malcolm’s

heart there was no peace, no gladness. He held his sword clenched in his grasp; his teeth chattered in the freshness of the dawn. The skirt of Margaret his queen, the mother of his children, floated before him through the trees, and as sure as the summer sky was blue above them, he was guilty before her. He could not but dimly feel that he was committing against her an act of unknighly and unkingly suspicion, and was imagining against innocence a cruel falsehood, and meditating murderous violence.

Beyond the ravine, to the north of the tower, the mount in the Den of Pittencrieff extended its ridge. In its rocky declivity there was a passage from below which penetrated into a recess or hollow scooped out of the solid rock, and forming a cave high enough for a man to stand upright in, long enough for a restless foot to pace it, and containing a natural fountain in the farther cleft, which rendered its uneven floor damp, and slippery, and cold as the tomb, even in the balmy summer season.

Malcolm stole to its mouth, scarce rustling the *gravel*; there, truly, knelt Margaret, her ebony

crucifix before her, the profane world, with its disturbance, and taunts, and revilings, which had latterly broken in upon her devotions, removed far from her. Even in the depth of winter, when the way was crisp with hoar-frost, and the cave hung round with blue, gleaming icicles, she had held her tryst; and, kneeling with her delicate limbs on the rugged rock, her face buried in her auburn hair, or raised upwards in an ecstasy, she sought to realise in her heart how the Divine Man bore the world's anguish.

Malcolm stood transfixed. He heard Margaret as she prayed, dreaming of no human presence, calling out for mercy on her pride, her earthliness, beseeching that she might be purified as by fire, that she might bring light to her brave, true Malcolm and their little children.

Malcolm turned and fled. He would have slain a rival ruthlessly, he would have sobbed out his heart's blood sooner than have yielded or asked quarter; but what had he to do with such business as this? Why had he, with his unclean tread, come to the very gate of heaven? Malcolm vowed a *vow as he hurried in disorder homewards, the*

sweat-drops falling from his grizzled locks, and his stalwart body panting with exhaustion. He would pluck out the tongue that ever again wagged with the most artfully concealed slander against his Margaret—that ever again remotely aspersed her white loyalty and faith. He would amend his ways; he would cease to wound and offend her; and since in her angelic endurance, her nobleness and kindness, she tolerated his brutality, he would strive to grow better, and braver, and purer. He would withdraw his mean distrust, and his hard persecution, and honour her and her Christianity, rapt and mystic as it was to his coarse and dull perceptions.

So the next time Margaret was absent in the capital, Malcolm sent masons and architects to the cave, caused it to be hewn into a commodious though solemn chamber, built in the spring that it might not flood the floor; had it strewn every morning, with rushes in winter, and flowers—gillyflowers and roses—in summer; and carved in it that fair table, with a grand crucifix, the wonder of many pilgrims, who came from the *sea-surrounded* Orkneys and the oaks of the Nith,

from France, and from Italy itself, to say their orisons where Saint Margaret had once knelt and prayed.

How Margaret's grey eyes must have dilated with wonder, how her lips must have parted with amazement, when first she revisited the cave, thus swept and garnished for her retirement by her husband's devotion. Coupling this change with his late gentleness, her wit would come nigh to the truth, and, with a crimson brow and weeping eyes, she would bless her husband in his humiliation, and thank God for his recall from the borders of the waste howling wilderness of riot, tyranny, and wickedness. A light dawned upon her which she could not shut out, though it is true she received it tremblingly and hesitatingly. She feared at first that it might be an *ignis fatuus* of the earth; but, having first seen it in this cave in the hill while she knelt before the crucifix, she at last took it as an illumination from Heaven. She stretched out her arms to it where it shone on her own home, on her women's looms and wheels, on her children's cradles, and by her husband's chair, and over his bowed head. There

is thy station, Margaret; do not doubt that, ~~on~~ disdain to fill it; reconcile Malcolm to his atonement, and reward him for his ancient forbearance. Woman, trust thy soul to thy God; leave the visions of Heaven to the immortal shore. Up serve thy husband and thy children, and thy whole household.

III.—THE WOMAN.

King Malcolm and Queen Margaret had been together all the morning; they had been hawking with the highly-prized Peregrine falcons, natives of this corner of their dominions. They had been standing at one of the unglazed windows of the tower watching a troop of poor folks returning from the porch of their Priory with alms (omen of the future of Wellwood and Halbeath!)—fragments of “black stone,” “very good for firing,” “with which they went away contented.” Now they were in their audience chamber, receiving under the dais various foreigners of rank, and traders who desired grants from Malcolm. They were much oftener *than ever before* associated together in their duties

and recreations, and the Court and country were smiling under the broad sunshine and sweet harmony. The Pope's legate was here to-day; there were also a few calculating Germans, who had strayed from the steel-yards in London, and were willing to begin their commerce near the mouth of the Scotwater, in the low-browed stone houses of Edinburgh, under the shelter of the Castle. There were also men of Danish descent, from the debatable territory of Northumberland, extending disputed homage to the Cean Mohr. But it was with an English envoy from the former Duke of Normandy that the royal couple had most concern.

Margaret bore no love to the invader. Very grudgingly and warily, even apart from his sympathy with Margaret in her feeling, had Malcolm made alliance with the eagle that had swooped down on England. Any day the fancy struck him he might flap his wings and extend his flight to Scotland, and try his beak and talons with the claws and muzzle of the Cean Mohr. This Norman messenger was dissatisfied with his somewhat *cold reception*; and, besides, he was piqued

at the loss of a wager with Malcolm at the bear-baiting which the King had introduced as one of his amusements, after the fashion of the gentle Confessor himself. With the proverbial Norman audacity and insolence, he scrupled not to sneer openly when Malcolm, on the arrival of an important despatch from a distant quarter of his kingdom, and in the absence of his clerkly confessor, employed Margaret to decipher the scroll. Nor did he otherwise when Malcolm found it necessary to issue a warrant on its authority, and was forced to append his handwriting, or seal, without the Queen's intervention—writing the word with such pause and sigh, such squaring of arms, and clumsy, sluggish, yet irksome travel of the pen over the parchment, and with such result of crooked, cramped, and at the same time colossal letters, looking as though they had been formed of unbarked wood, bent and gnarled on the bough. It is true the performance might well have provoked a modest man's smile, or an arrogant man's mockery; and the ambassador too plainly showed the latter. The Cean Mohr flung down *the* document testily, and turned aside his head

on seeing Margaret watching him with earnest eyes, and masking her mortification at his failure by attempting to draw off the attention of the English knight, and to entangle him in conversation. She was asking rapid questions about London, Essex, Kent, the Thames, the Severn, Matilda and her children, and how it fared with the disputes between them and their iron father, though she knew each answer touched old wounds.

Malcolm was not vindictive. When his fury was not upon him, he was more placable than the meanest. He would not condescend to chastise even this Sir Aylmer, but he was vexed to think that Queen Margaret might be grieved when she thought of the report the Norman would carry back to her few friends in her native land regarding the incorrigible, unredeemable rudeness of her husband Malcolm the Scot.

"The malicious, presuming robber," Margaret exclaimed, in her irritation, the moment Sir Aylmer's back was turned, "he abuses the footing to which neither law nor right entitles him. He was softer and smoother when I last saw him *bending and fawning before Edward's cowl.*"

“Nay, Margaret, let him laugh; he laughs best who laughs last over his horse’s head, or behind his sword’s point and his helmet’s bars. I would not mind it a whit were it not for the report of your being linked to a churl. Ah! Lady Margaret, I could find it in my heart to take up breviary once more and con my task with right good will, and distance all competitors, so I might kiss thy hand and thy cheek for a prize.”

“Make the trial, my lord,” begged Margaret, bashfully, for the request sounded like a confession of her own superiority; “let your greatness prove to them that no attainment can come too late, and no beginning be too simple for the Cear Mohr. Oh! my husband, triumph over their petty book-craft as you triumph over their guile and their crooked ways in your manliness and frankness.”

“Alack-a-day! my Margaret,” answered Malcolm, laughing, yet flushing with pride and pleasure, “you over-rate your poor goodman. I am too old, too hot, too wilful and stubborn and too unaccustomed to contradiction or control. None of your priests or friars would suffer me even Father Ambrose and good Turgot would

give me up as an incorrigible dullard and an impious rebel."

"Not so, they would be only too proud to aid the king; but if you will not test their reverence, take my poor skill for thy guide, and leave Father Ambrose and Turgot to Edward and Ethelred, and to little Maud, who will illumine missals fairly for a woman. Dost thou fear to betray my duty, King Malcolm, and to render me bold; or canst thou not spare a moment's leisure to honour thy wife and to vindicate her pride in thee?"

"By the mass, Margaret, we will find the time, since thou hast such faith in my heavy brains," cried Malcolm, fervently; and, cost him what it might—his indolence, elderly supineness, fetters of habit, chagrin at his old folly, and confusion at the comments of his comrades—he kept his word.

And Malcolm having wedded no chattering sparrow or wren of one note, was Margaret's lover to the last day of his existence; he coveted her company, craved her approbation, and was happy in her praise and admiration long after her auburn locks were streaked with grey, and her fair, pale face was furrowed with years.

The legend tells that he quitted his feasts, that he overcame the sloth, and resisted the excess, to which stiff joints and a mind only capable of using the broad book of Nature so tempted him in the long winter nights, when the Mighty Volume was shut, and he could only feed his hawks and hounds, play with his jester, gossip with his nobles, or listen admiringly to his Margaret and fondle his children. In spite of all this passive entertainment, however, his very jaws would have cracked with portentous yawns; which, had he not been an upright man, might have foreboded a mad expedition to the Holy Land, or a sudden aggression on a next-door neighbour, on the spring, like a wolf or a bear, to welcome him. He re-arranged his evening pastimes, and adopted fresh occupations. He entered Margaret's bower, where her elder boys were listening to her instructions, her maidens at work, her minstrel singing, or her monk of the evening reciting his miracle. And in place of claiming the deference of all and overturning their engagements, or listening drowsily to the lulling voice of poet or priest, he hurried to the table set apart for his

studies. There he traced the lines and completed the curves, and read passages with an honest diligence, only succeeded by a merry mischief when he had grown full weary. There Margaret bent over him devotedly, applauded his feats, encouraged him in his despondency, and corrected his blunders. Nay, she sometimes even slapped the kingly cheek full playfully, or pulled away the parchment, when he would make sport of his task, telling him gravely he might seek another clerk. She never failed, however, to be at his command next night, when, grave and industrious, he came once more eagerly, joyfully, and hopefully to his studies.

Whether Malcolm lived to become a scholar under so rare a teacher, or whether that bloody battle in Northumberland interrupted the old man's lessons, is not on record. It is certain, however, that years after, Margaret, lying in Edinburgh and hearing the tidings that her Malcolm had been slain on the field, and that her eldest son Edward had died of his deep arrow-wound the day after the battle, desired urgently to confess her sins and bless her surviving children. Her spirit passed without delay to join her best beloved before her Lord;

and her body was piously stolen from a poster door by her son Ethelred, just as Donald Bane, the second usurper in Scottish history, was thundering at the main gate of the castle.

: What wonder that, dwelling on Margaret's virtues and pondering with dazzled eyes on her sanctity, they should canonize her, translate her bones at the Reformation to Douay, and still cherish relics of her in the Escorial?

Thus they worship the saint; but better yet is it to follow the example of the woman and the wife. Simple Scottish mothers will continue to tell their children with lingering exultation how wise, tender English Margaret taught the criss-cross rows to the great Cean Mohr.

SHADOWS ON THE COAST OF FIFE.

MY story refers to a remote time. William the Norman had not yet won the field of Hastings and founded the Abbey of Battle to atone to God and man for the day of bitterness, the day of death. Bede's tomb was yet new in its shrine at Durham, and good St. Cuthbert, and stout St. Dunstan, and holy St. Columba were patrons and friends to English and Scotch alike. As yet eels and swine paid the rental of much land in the woods and morasses of England. The monks cultivated choice vines, and Bishop Adhelm harped cunningly on his harp to *win hearers to his sermons*. Vast forests then

surrounded London itself, their recesses sheltering herds of wild beasts, whose ravages justified the dreary Saxon name of Wolf-Monat, applied to the month of January. Edinburgh consisted of a rude fortress and one long, continuous, steep street. The houses were mostly one-storeyed, and built of solid blocks of stone, with some higher wooden structures, or thatch-roofed, turf-walled huts, but there was neither palace nor abbey. The Water of Leith was a clear country stream, and herons might still have been seen standing by the Black Rock, and hawks cutting the air over Arthur's Seat.

A hunted man lay in a weym or cave, on the coast of Fife, in hiding from his enemies, and in watch for a chance of escape. This cave was no common den or earth-hole into which a fox might burrow; it was worthy the name, and worthy the man who lay there days and nights, while the wind howled in the crannies, and the waves dashed into the gulley. It was formed by a mighty scoop in the high coast-line, built in by great boulders and huge fragments of rock on the land side, and open seawards. Time, which

has worked wide changes elsewhere, has done little here. It is true the coast-line has altered somewhat, tides and currents have followed its lead; and the cave, which then was inaccessible at high water and in stormy seas, is regularly flooded twice a day, even as far as the remains of the thick wall reared across the steep entrance by the exigences of the contraband trade in those busy days of coast smuggling, when yeomen drank claret as well as their lairds. But otherwise the scene is unchanged. The invincible bulwarks of the land guard rich-terraced fields of old brake and shingle, named locally, in all modesty, "the braes," "the sea braes," "king-craig braes." The turf, softest of short close verdure, clings to the sombre grey rock, and the green is relieved by patches of yellow moss, veins of white or pink spar, as simple tongues will term it, splashes of white or green from gathering stalactites, and the pale fawn gray, where the rocks are encrusted with barnacles. The prevailing colours are, however, the blue of the foreground, the vivid green and sober gray behind; and chaste, grand, grave, yet not gloomy beauty belongs to

these vast, irregular, motionless stony forms, which, associated with the stillness of the shore, the monotonous sound of the water, the freedom and purity of the air, and the absence of leafy tremulous shade, affect the spectator as would a group, chiselled in tintless marble, defying the rainbow brilliance.

The coast scene was much the same to the hunted man as to the civilized, educated pleasure-seeker of to-day; it had the same loneliness, the same solemnity, the same fixed faithfulness. The shells lie white and cheerful on the yellow sands, or among the crumbled-down, well-nigh black "trap." The face of one rock is ribbed aslant, as though one of the geologist's icebergs had crashed past and torn it thus ages ago; another is perforated and drilled as by round shot; while a third is clean cut, as a mason or miner will "slap" the wall of pit or quarry. One detached fragment there was, black and green, which assumed the figure and attitude of a lion couchant in its bath; but when you have reached and doubled it, then, like the monsters in enchanted halls, it dissolves *into ridged rock* of ordinary substance, shape, and

shadow, no more resembling a maned lion than a horned unicorn. Twin flowers have blossomed here for nearly a thousand years, their bright lips salt with spray. There is the crane's bill geranium, convolvulus sized, and of a Cæsar's purple; stunted wild roses, indemnifying themselves for their dwarfish foliage and stainless white blossoms by their wealth of thorns; blue bells, unlike the roses, the largest of their kind, true helmets of St. George; green and yellow stonecrop, and pale blue oyster plant, creeping among the stones; lilac sea-rocket, washed and blown almost colourless; and rich amber crowfoot, and rosy sea-pink, stuck here and there as bouquets in the rough rock, or nodding in tufts from topmost pinnacles. Here are ferns, too, in summer; and in spring golden cowslips gladden the whole line of braes.

Through jutting crags runs the same defile as the refugee looked upon. There are the same toothed furrows running into the sea, the farthest terminating in the invariable long, low, peak-crested islet, the single column rising sheer from the waves, and standing like the

solitary shaft of some ruined cathedral. There are the same shallows and ripples and zone of olive-brown weed; the same sudden turn before the entrance of the cave, the lofty hollow into the hill scooping out the blue sky as well as the grey rock. The opposite rocks are yet more fantastic, the foremost being a colossal unhewn dead gable, while the next has been slowly hewn by the water into double arches—huge misshapen arches, square at the summit, narrowing in the neck, and widening again below—suggesting the handicraft of rude Pictish artificers and Titan Calibans. Seen through these arches again is the blue sky or sea, or a strikingly new feature of the coast—fluted basaltic pillars, now high, now low, forming a final barrier. In the depth between, the rough stones of a loose causeway are churned in storms, and slowly rocked in calms. An ascent of a hundred yards over a bank of earth, scantily matted by scrubby vegetation—the coarse burdock and dank nettle—kept moist by trickling streamlets from the rock, and then a contrary descent, discovers where the hunted *man lay*.

It was the roughest of chambers, with low unequal sloping roof and walls closing in all round, save where the wide mouth, door and window in one, opened on the sea, disclosing the coast of Berwick, and awakening thoughts of England.

If the scene is but little altered, the feelings which it inspires must be to a great extent uniform. Yes, truly, though the hunted man lay there, not dressed in broad cloth, hose, trews, and felt hat, with short clipped hair, and clean shaven chin, but clad in woollen tunic edged with embroidery, his mantle fastened on his shoulders with a ring, his legs swathed with crossed bandages of cloth, his long yellow hair flowing from beneath his scanty cap, and falling in curls down his shoulders. The raiment or the fashion of hair could not have had much to do with it, nor even that other and closer garment of education, when there was the same strongly sentient human nature, the same impressionable imagination, and the same central figures of faith. No heathen was that man, though he carried his *hunting-knife* in his girdle and could use it

readily enough, and would eat his meat from the spit on which it was roasted. Through the galaxy of saint and angel, he recognised the very Triune Sun, before which all Christendom bends in adoration.

A husband he was, and a father. Perhaps doubly, trebly dear were wife and children to the untrained, unexhausted, fierce, fond heart, with its narrow channels and its few passions. Doubtless he doated on his lady—the bread-giver—in her long trailing dress, and with her head muffled in the nunlike couvrechief, so significant of domestic retirement and peaceful occupations, when she went abroad. He would look admiringly on the spirited boys—on the heir who loved the feathers from the wild swan's wing and the black cock's tail, the horns from the stag, and the skin from the spotted snake, and on the boy whose eyes sparkled at sight of the priest's illumined missal, and on the little lad whose ears were charmed by the minstrel's song. He would lovingly regard his girls as they teased the boys, or waited upon them, or cleverly mimicked them, or most of all *when they closely copied their mother*. Doubtless

the young ones were wont to meet the chief at his castle gate, to receive his booty, to be lifted on his horse, or to bestride his dogs. They would smile on his knee during the dark days and long nights of winter, when all was locked in the idleness of gale and torrent and snowdrift, just as children have done from time immemorial.

We must not fall into the serious error of fancying that the primitive chief's primitive tower was comfortless and joyless in its day. It wanted much which our houses possess, but, certes it might have owned what was needful for happiness; and it did probably command, in its simplicity, some advantages which we in our artificiality have lost.

It was but a tower. The dungeons and cattle sheds were below, the hall above, and the sleeping-closets high up beneath the battlements. If you add to this the postern, the sally port and barbican, you have the utmost extent of accommodation. But it had its warm hearth, its ingenious loom, its legend, or song, or sacred lesson. There was space enough in it for faith, hope, and charity. There was no *absence of interest* in the Wolf-Monat; nor

in the Kele-Monat, when the first herb was ready for the great pot ; nor in the Lenet-Monat, when every net, drag, and fishing-hook was [abroad to relieve the household from the wearisome salt fish. There was excitement in the woods or on the water when state affairs were tranquil, when kingly parade or church ceremony did not supervene, and even when neighbourly friendship or neighbourly hostility did not afford keenest enjoyment, and draw forth the best or the worst tempers of the race. And from the season of Tri-Milki, whose name marks one of the sweet eras of rural life, on through Meyd-Monat, when the cattle stood knee-deep in the pastures, to the great harvest, and the slaughter of beasts and storing of fire-wood, and brewing of honey mead and barley ale, so many occupations and delights were condensed, that even the stationary lady rose from her stool or her couch, and in spite of her strange encumbering gear, led an open-air life for the short summer, at once softening and inspiring the retainers by her share in their daily toils and experience of their daily pleasures.

Depend upon it there was a crowning bitterness

in this man's cup when he remembered these things. He might now have been treading the fresh furrows, inspecting the extermination of the corn marigold, or winding through the woods in their gayest, tenderest bravery, or flinging off the first falcon with his lady ; he might have been witnessing the last milking in the meadow, or the calling of the lambs into the fold ; while in sad reality he was crouching here stiff, chill, harassed, in great trouble and in bondage. He sat hearkening to the dash of the waves instead of to the tales of his fellows or the prattle of his children, and with no prospect of relief except in the forbidden help of poor fishermen, who might row him over the ferry, and so enable him to ride or run through "Pichtland" or "Locthen," over the borders into England—more friendly, honourable, and stanch to the ancient allegiance on this disastrous occasion than was the kingdom of the Scots.

The throb of exultation at the first sense of solitude and freedom, and then the contracting, aching, gradually overpowering conception of loneliness and powerlessness ; these followed by fitful, trifling employments, inevitable fits of ab-

stration, and unreasonable, unbounded misery ; —all were experienced by the hunted man, just as they would be now by any solitary prisoner in deadly peril, waiting in one of the fastnesses of nature.

Macduff had escaped from danger, and had left, exposed to havoc and destruction, his most valuable treasures. A horrible crime had been committed far to the north, away in Strathmore, which he could never sanction by submission or silence. Though the deed was done, and the usurper was too powerful and prosperous to be arraigned for public judgment and condemnation, the murdered king's subjects belonged to the fatherless, dispossessed lad with the host in Northumbria, and they were bound to preserve for him their services, and offer to him their persons and powers, to aid him in his righteous vengeance.

There was little time to hesitate and demur, to plot and to plan, even although hesitation and demurring, and plotting and planning for other than express siege or ambuscade, had been the fashion then. Macduff did not fear overmuch for dame and

offspring, even if his castle were surrounded, and his gates invaded. The man asked his own manly, generous nature, and it answered him that the stern man, the hot and passionate man, "was yet mild to good men who loved God," and by consequence merciful to weak women and little children. The dark ages had their amenities amidst the constant warfare, which we are only too apt to lose sight of, because the exceptions are more prominently forced upon our notice.

Macduff could not conceive that Macbeth, wise and wily as he was, would wantonly dip his hands in innocent blood, and so increase his black remorse and add to his difficulties. How should he guess that eating the evil fruit of the tree of knowledge blinds sense as well as humanity, destroys sagacity as well as benevolence? The villain, having once taken the false step, blunders on till he ends by being at once brute and fool. But Macduff had sick misgivings and dim wretched forebodings. He sometimes thought of a woman turned out without shelter or defence to wander in the darkness and chill of night, or of a wild mother screaming o'er her famishing brood, a spectacle

not uncommon in these and the times just preceding. It required all the strength of his manhood to resist the vain impulse given by these fancies. No living creature could have breathed a more wretched, hampered existence: he dared not move abroad by day when the tide was back, and by night, even when the moon shone out, he saw only the white glimmer on the grim stone lion, or the faint line of the sandy bents, or the silver foam of the waves. If, at imminent risk, he scaled the neighbouring heights, difficult to climb even at full noon, a world of black waving tree-tops, a bay, and, if the night was clear, a conical hill, bounded his field of vision. His own castle lay to the east, in the hollow where the springs fed his moat, but even the smoke from his chimneys was not discernible above the waste of wood. Pinched with hunger, and overcome with anxiety, the prophet Elijah by the brook Cherith was hardly more straitened than this man.

And he would have fared hardly had there not been as gallant spirits as himself among the hynels and ceorls of the fishing hamlet. A proclamation had been issued forbidding the natives of the coast to

nourish the rebel, or to expedite his flight, on pain of life and limb. Yet, night after night, the neighbouring fishermen stole along in the shadow of the rocks, in one or other of their high-prowed boats, and cast into his den cured fish, barley-bread, goats' flesh, and even skilfully floated in sealed vessels of milk and ale, and billets of firewood. They had gone the length of binding themselves, on the first free hour, when the enemies' boats were off the watch, to cut out into the open Frith and pass him across, where strong limb and stout heart, sword and shield and hired horse would be something.

Three days and nights had come and gone, and the agony of the watch in the changeless solitude became almost intolerable. To plunge into the blue or gray waters and be seen no more, and so escape the cord or the axe; or to rise and speed to his castle, and there learn the worst, were strong, almost irresistible temptations. But to do either was to leave young Malcolm forlorn in his misfortunes, to bid him cleave his way back to his father's throne single-handed. No, the refugee must swallow his own bitter morsel, and endure his

own burden patiently, that the higher weal might be preserved. The public good must have been recognised by Pict and Scot, Saxon and Norman, just as by Whig and Tory, Liberal and Conservative.

Sometimes he would hear the dash of an oar, or the distant bark of a dog, and raise his haggard head, deeming his deliverance nigh. He would say to himself that he exaggerated mischances, and invented accidents, and affrighted himself like any child ; and at the word "child" he would venture from his cavity and gather the sounding shells and glistening stones, and store them in his pouch for his children in the castle buried in the wood.

The spring night was misty ; the creeping fog came in and hid the land, and the beleaguered captive crouched expectant and eager. The thin curling vapour from the fire, which he was forced to maintain to protect joints and marrow from the piercing sea damp, was lost in the general fog. The waves were rolling in unseen with a hollow boom. He could not sleep, and the despairing dreams which had haunted him were banished by

his feverish wakefulness. He still saw his loving dame, but she was praying before the crucifix with a heavenly face, and boy and babe clustered round her, and rose into the air above her head.

The pensive, heated stupor was broken suddenly by something stirring in the water near him : it paddled, puffed, and approached him, all alone in this den, in the darkness of night. His hair rose, his skin crept, and the perspiration gathered on his brow. He thought of the deluding mermaid, of the dreaded sea-serpent, of the sea-horse and old dragon. He was weary of this wild cave, impatient of its thraldom and its languor ; yet the next moment he handled his sword, and bent forward for the terrible encounter. But surely he had seen that brown head and deep neck, and those broad paws before ! It was his own wolfhound Thor, which had been held back by main force when he left the castle. Right loyal vassal ! He had tracked his master's footsteps where none else dared to follow. He was welcome, a thousand times welcome ! But when the master put forth his hand to pat his favourite, his hand touched blood on the creature's shoulder, blood that no

water could have washed away, for it flowed apace from a spear wound not yet stanchèd.

Thor was well trained, sedate, stately, and would meddle in no ordinary fray. The dame had said she would command Thor to lie down by her matronly seat, and he would stay there till Macduff returned. What then had brought him here? His coat was frayed and scorched, as if he had come through fire as well as water, and as his master examined him, the good dog, in place of bounding and barking, fixed his liquid eyes piteously on the face he loved, and uttered a long lamentable howl that shook the cave and trembled away over the water.

“Now God have mercy! I can bide this no longer,” cried Macduff, starting up, and eagerly buckling his sword-belt. Just then he heard the muffled splash of oars and creak of helm, and a subdued chorus smote his ear. He listened; it was the ferrymen, and soon his allies’ boat hove in sight, and pushed rapidly forward to the mouth of the cave. “Come off, master; there is not a moment to be lost. It is as mirk in the Frith as a moonless December, and unless we be run down by

some other craft, we'll be in Pichtland long ere the morning break."

Without a word, Macduff with his four-footed attendant sprang into the boat, and moodily he sat while the men shoved off quickly, and rowed in smothered excitement. In a little while the veil of mist, to their deep vexation, drew aside, and the young May moon looked down upon them.

Cold came the night blast sighing and souging over the wide ocean by St. Andrew's shrine, ruffling the broad Frith. Coldly looked the pale new moon on the speck of a boat, rocking as it sailed faster and faster. The shadowy faces of the men, sharpened by anxiety and worn with labour, also looked wan and cold. The last moon had shone unmoved on Duncan's monstrous murder, under the sanctuary of his chosen subject's roof. This young moon, a dainty crescent, had witnessed the rifled home, and hearth, and altar. Macduff divined all, and his heart was heavy, and his brain wild to madness.

"Hold on, my men," cried the steersman, "put your shoulders to the work, else we may fall, master and man together, into those fell hands."

“Nay, let us all sink together to the bottom rather,” answered Macduff, suddenly rising up and nearly capsizing the boat.

The men paused and stared in amazement. They were a remarkable race, these ferrymen, and bore foreign features, as they had done for ages. They had not the tawny hair, ruddy flesh, and stalwart proportions of the Dane, but the bold black eye and the hawk nose, which later came across the Channel to conquer England. They were not bluff, cleanly, riotous Flemings, like the Buckhaven fishermen, but arrogant, vaunting, aggressive Normans, with the free Norse blood fermented and quickened on the French shore. Not always trustworthy, they were untamable and clannish to excess.

They gazed blankly at the chief. “Is this what we have come out for?” they demanded excitedly. “We might have saved ourselves our trouble, ay, and stinted our loss. Cuthbert is a widow’s son, and Rollo has weans half a score, and Patrick was wed by the priest of Saint Mary’s this very sunset.”

Macduff sank down ; keenly he felt their reproach.

They were rich as he had been, and they had risked it all for him and his poverty, for him and Thor, for him and Malcolm, for the avenger of Duncan.

“Rest you,” he said to them; “I spake but an idle word,—God and the saints forgive me that and all my sins, and occupy me with their work now! Enough time and to spare will remain for mourning. Alas, alas, my wife, my children! On, on to England. When Macduff shall come again in power, and when Malcolm shall sit on his father’s throne, you shall learn whether you have served me for nought. No mother’s son shall be lost to her if I can give him a cast on his sorrowful way; no poor soul shall suffer for lack of masses; no humble man’s petition shall fail in reaching my lord the king’s ears, if a king’s breath which is in his nostrils can avail him. Row, row, my men, for England, and though you bear no happier wight than Macduff, with no bulkier train than his dog Thor, Malcolm shall yet triumph in his just cause.”

PEGGY MELVILLE'S TRIUMPH.

I.—THE RENCONTRE—FAMILY MATTERS RIGHTLY DISCUSSED.



IN the winding streets of the ancient burgh of Crail, with its posts and gates formed of drift-wood and whales' jaws, and itself as salt flavoured as the neighbouring German Ocean, there walked, in the time of good Queen Bess, a grave young man of thirty, in a sober but richly embroidered cloak and velvet cap. He was one of those Melvilles whose names are so famous in the history of the Scottish Kirk—James, nephew of the courageous Andrew. They were men of learning, condition, and birth, claiming not *only kinship* with the Melvilles of Carnbee

and Dysart, but even a distant share of kingly lineage through John of Gaunt, "time-honoured Lancaster." They had spirit and wit, too, though small in body, that famous uncle and nephew. Andrew was fiery and irresistible,—"a blast," as he was sagaciously defined; while James was regarded by the time-servers and double-dealers, the cowards and traitors of the day, as still more dangerous, though he was the hope of the milder and more peaceable patriots of all opinions, because he was a "crafty byding man." They were like each other in person, and warmly attached with the reverential relation of father and son, and the confidential bond of an equal friendship. James, with loving vanity, writes that he "would to God he were as like Mr. Andrew in gifts of mind, as he is thought to be in proportions of body and lineaments of face; for there is none, that is not otherwise particularly informed, but takes me for Mr. Andrew's brother." Slight, spare men, but tough in warfare, stanch in endurance, with faces full of intellect and will; trained not *only* to play the part of mental athletes, but

to make the best of their scanty flesh. Mr. James, when he writes of his school and school-mates, the "gentle, honest men's bairns in the country about," not only records their lessons in "letters and godliness," but in "honest games," and particularizes for the future information of those to whom Presbyterianism is an altogether harsh and austere profession, "that there also we had the air guid, and fields reasonable fair, and by our maister were teached to handle the bow for archerie, the club for goff, the batons for fencing, also to rin, to leepe, to swoum, to warsell, to prove pratteiks, everie ane having his match and antagonist baith in our lessons and play. A happie and golden time indeed, gif our negligence and unthankfulness had not moved God to shorten it, partlie by decaying of the number, which caused the maister to wearie, and partlie by a pest, quilk the Lord, for sin and contempt of his gospell, sent upon Montrose, distant from out Logie bot two miles; so the scholl scaled, and we were all sent for and brought hame. I was at that scholl the space of almost fyve *yeirs.*"

These Melvilles withal were as noble-looking men as any specimens of robust Christianity. There was nothing of the scarecrow or thread paper about Andrew when he led the belligerent Assembly, or about James when he addressed the secretly sympathising English Council, who might accept and honour a bench of bishops of their own free will, but whose mingled Norman and Saxon blood formed a puddle far too saucy for the doctrine of the divine right of kings, and the imposition of this or that form of worship in the teeth of the worshippers.

The Melvilles, knit by hereditary friendship to Erskine of Dun, John Knox, and Buchanan, were strong both in the kirk and the schools, but especially in the kirk, with its high authority and broad aspirations—then one of the great arenas of Scottish ambition, where scions of the gentry fought as gallantly under their banners of love and charity as their brethren beneath their bloody ensigns in the fields of “hie Germanie” during the Thirty Years’ War; or their fathers following the watch-words of the Lords of the *Congregation* against Mary of Guise and her

cardinal, Beatoun. But the Melvilles were not ambitious in the low grovelling sense. Violent they might be, arrogant, rude in measure, for their enemies have styled them so ; but even their enemies have never accused them of mercenariness and meanness. More unselfish men, less covetous, truer to their principles at any cost, more generous and kindly in their domestic relations, more godly in their lives, hardly existed ; and the kingdom of Fife keeps to this day, in a faint odour of gratitude, the solid facts, which attest that to the liberal hands of James Melville of Kilrenny and William Scott of Cupar, it owes a quaint manse and a fair spire.

That strange little town of Crail was gray and still enough nigh three hundred years ago, and the keen searching air was snell indeed this ripe October. But Mr. James, though he drew his cloak around him, faced it with the enjoyment of a persevering, wholesome spirit, and passed on, acknowledged respectfully on all sides, and looked after occasionally as a man to be seen on a white day. Men of influence and authority were in particular request at that moment, for the times

were especially precarious. The terror of the Armada rested on the land. Andrew Melville had been speaking and preaching against the dreaded invasion to students and burghers, before the king and the foreign ambassadors, until town-house and country-place, farm and cottage, were awake to the formidable news, and warned of the danger. It had been blazed about for a long time, and now, when its fulfilment was certain and close at hand, distracting rumours were rife of landings of the Spaniards at Dunbar, at St. Andrew's, at Aberdeen, in the Tay, and Cromarty Frith. Already Mr. James had been twice stopped and asked his last advice from the capital, and whether he would stay to encounter the vaunting, idolatrous foe, or flee the coast till better times, when Mr. James replied, with animation, that he would abide with his sea-faring men of the Anstruthers, who were as strong and sure as any Spaniard he had come across. They would fight for their faith and their wives and bairns, against the Pope of Rome and his slaves.

But probably Mr. James was then less troubled

at the thought of a struggle with the captains of the Armada than at the spectacle of an old lady, of precise and stately aspect, who sallied forth from a large square house, with many broad windows, set in the wide, weather-beaten, grass-grown street, and near to the cross, not yet plucked down. She approached as if to arrest his progress. He might escape the Armada, but he could not avoid his second cousin, Mistress Peggy Melville of Carnbee, and he would certainly be detained a while by her to receive her family confidences. He had been hurrying to the beach beyond the town, by the braes of prickly whins, to take counsel of nature as to the prospects of a storm. Moreover, he was now engaged in the composition of "The Seaman's Shout, or Mutual Exhortation to go forward in the Spirituall Voyage," which formed a contribution to the poetic half of his "Spiritual Propine of a Pastour to his People." Along with the "Godly Dream of my Lady Culross," the paraphrases of the Psalms, by Buchanan, Andrew Melville, and David Murray, and Apologias and Consolations *without number*, this Propine formed the stand-

ard Scottish literature of the day. Peggy Melville's straightforward, pertinacious, somewhat overbearing statements and demands would sadly entangle the thread of his ideas; but James Melville was more accustomed to be interrupted than let alone, and would as soon have thought of being haughty and pettish to his mate Elizabeth Dury, or to his little Andrew or Anne, as to Mistress Peggy, one of his mothers, as he called her pleasantly. Peggy was a zealous supporter of the kirk, a bountiful friend in her potent independence and influence to a crowd of the poor and needy craftsmen and boatmen of Crail, and an admirer and lover, though he might deem her just a thought too much of a councillor, of his own unworthy self. So with just a little sigh, he delivered himself up, not without a twinge of his tender conscience that he should even have had an ungracious feeling to Mistress Peggy, to be hailed and laid hold of and turned about as she willed for the rest of his walk.

Mistress Peggy Melville was as imposing a specimen of spinsterhood, as Mr. James was *of his calling* of a divine. She was big-boned

and harsh featured, but with a certain native nobility about her large proportions which explained how it was her contemporaries insisted on her claims to good-looks in her time. But now, truly, she was but a striking relic of the past. She wore the fashion of her day, which was calculated to exaggerate her peculiarities of size and air. Her dress was of green velvet, somewhat faded but still rich in texture, with a plaited farthingale bulging out her quaint sides above the long, armour-like, peaked stomacher encasing her waist. A ruff with its supertasse supported her neck, and the light red hair, which was still profuse and unstreaked with grey, frizzled, crisped, and laid in a rope from ear to ear, and wreathed with silver; and over the whole, with some regard to her years, she had the kircher of russet pinned beneath her chin. Thus attired, Mistress Peggy sailed along the street of Crail, with her maiden in flocket, hood, and pinnars bearing her fan, her velvet bound gold-clasped bible, and a basket of such donations as she might distribute on the instant to any of her dependents.

“I wish you gude day, Mr. James,” cried the old lady, stopping short at once; “a sight of you is like the gift of a cordial, or essence more precious than common. I was on my way with Mariot to measure out the Widow Auchterlonie’s duds, but the dead will keep while you and I take the air and hold some converse, which may the Lord send to our mutual edification.”

“Amen, Mistress Peggy,” answered James Melville, without the slightest shade of ridicule or insincerity. “Well met, madam, what is your will with me to day?” said he, as he offered her his ruffled hand. So leading her carefully and tenderly, the two took their way to one of the promenades of Crail.

“I’ve muckle to tell you, Mr. James, and muckle to hear of your doings; but first, Captain Joshua is to be in within eight days, and I’m thinking to beat up your quarters and wait him there, for the ‘Lord Henry’ will not pass Anster; there is not water in the hole here to float her.”

Mr. James was almost relieved that Mistress Peggy did not dash at once into the hackneyed bugbear of the Armada, but at the same time he could

not resist drawing out her opinion on the subject. "You'll be heartily welcome ; my Lizzie will count herself highly honoured to have our brave, modest kinsman, Captain Joshua, again appearing to windward, as the nautical folk term it ; but will he not run some danger of falling in with the van or rear of King Philip's monster squadron, that is to bear down upon these islands and annihilate them, unless the Lord interpose in our behalf?"

Mistress Peggy stopped short in indignation. "The Lord will hinder, and even if He do not so—grant that he pardon me for speaking my mind, if it be presumption—do you think Joshua Melville and his protestant crew are not enough for a third, or a half, or the whole rout of these cattle?"

"I believe it, if need were," James Melville assured her. "Mistress Peggy, I admire thy constancy."

"There sud be no admiration going, sir ; there sud only be derision and wrath at the puny cubs, who are ready to flee to the hills and the caves because *the King* of Spain launches his

hulks. Shame on them ! I cry, shame on them for Scotsmen and Reformers !”

“ But none are so far left to themselves as to *speak* of flight, the question is only the keeping ourselves in readiness for an immediate engagement, or the propriety of a timely retreat, till we collect our forces for a fair encounter—a right tug of war.”

“ Retreat, quo he ? a beggarly blush for running awa. But you’ll no propose it, Mr. James, you’ll no abet it, nor will Mr. Andrew, though he’s made the loons ower proud already with his notice.”

“ Na, na, Mistress Peggy, we stand at once by our creed ; we’ve enough to do treating with prelacy, let alane popery. But what would you do yoursel, Mistress Peggy, in case of a strait ? would you bide quiet with my wife and my bairns in the Manse of Anster ?”

“ Troth, no, James Melville,” answered she, grimly ; “ I would ride back to my ain house here in Crail, and I would mount a guard of the auld Carnbee men, and the bodies here that *I’ve served*, and that have a liking for me and my

name, and I would take my father's auld blunderbuss, and I would point it at the first Don who rode up the street, and shoot him dead, as sure as I'm a stout woman, and though I should be dragged through the town at the cart tail within the hour. Eh! James Melville, it is a hard blow to my pride that I maun stand behind biggit wa's, just because I'm a woman, and a scrap of a man like you—a jimp lad, though you've a great soul, I'll no deny that—every Melville has pith either in mind or body—to walk out with sword and pistol even aneath your Geneva gown."

"You dinna grudge me my birthright, surely, Mistress Peggy; mind though Deborah went down to the battle, it was Barak she bade lead the Lord's hosts."

"But it was Jael that slew Sisera, lad; you're halting there."

"Be thankful, madam, it was not a bishop who got that advantage; but you would not have the heart to slay and kill, Peggy, and I'll stand to the death on the fact that Judith only exists in the Apocrypha."

"Na, I dinna need to appeal to Judith; but

though I maun keep house with my lasses, and only bind your wounds and part your spoil, I can send you a brave recruit, Mr. James—Captain Robert is at hame with us this week or more.”

“A gathering of friends for some work,” exclaimed James Melville, for a Scrymgeour was an uncle of James Melville’s, and this Captain Robert of the “Beacoun” was a Scrymgeour from the Scrymgeours of Dudhope, Constables of Dundee, and hereditary standard-bearers. “Has Captain Robert come in to aid us, or has he taken prizes in his last run?”

Mistress Peggy bent her brows discontentedly. “I cannot flatter you men folk of the family with any sic wiselike errand in this fellow’s person. Captain Robert was wont to be a gallant spirit, fonder of the salt water, the quarter-deck, his ship’s cargo, and his enemies’ faces, than any vain diversion on shore. Joshua thought well of him, very well of him, but he’s lost his credit—clean.”

“Peradventure he may protest—

‘O Melibœe, Deus nobis hæc otia facit.’

I hope he’ll redeem his character in time.”

"I understand none of your Latin," asserted Mistress Peggy, sharply ; "but you've heard that he's making his suit to young Eppie Melville?"

"I confess Lizzie entertained me the other morning with some such gentle prospect ; but I fear you disapprove of the match."

"I!" cried Mistress Peggy, vehemently, "who said I disapproved? The matter is neither here nor there to me ; but if bairns will take upon them the troubles of life, and marry and be given in marriage at sic a season, I say Eppie Melville has no cause to be aught but very thankful for the offer of a decent lad, a brave, active gentleman, a Scrymgeour allied to her ain clan."

"Then, is it Eppie that says No to her wooer?" inquired James Melville, certain that something was wrong, and wishing to ascertain the obstacle from so ready a judge as Mistress Peggy.

"Do ye consider your speech, Mr. James? That young Eppie is a bairn that owes Joshua and me a bairn's duty—honour and obedience. What business has she with Noes if we think fit to grant Ayes?"

"But, *Mistress Peggy*," urged James Melville,

“when God instituted marriage, he brought Eve direct to Adam for his approbation, acceptance, and peculiar portion—so it is written, A man shall leave father and mother, and cleave to his wife ; and again, *vice versâ*, let a woman make her own selection and abide faithful, body and soul, to her husband. I would not encourage contumacy in bairns, but to deny their freedom of choice, partakes of that provoking of the children to anger, which is expressly forbidden to all parents and governors.”

“I like not such splitting of straws, Mr. James ; there were no parents to the fore in Adam’s case. What had parents to do with Adam and Eve ?”

“The rib was taken from Adam’s side, my dear madam, to imply that he alone was concerned.”

“I want none of the logic of the schools, Mr. James ; I wonder to hear you so loose in your doctrines, and you a father yoursel.”

“I do assure you, madam, I exact all obedience and reverence from my children, particularly while they are in a state of infancy and pupilage.”

“Fell-like obedience and reverence ! The last *time I was yont*, I spied Andrew refusing his

parritch, and Anne tiring herself, like a little Jezebel, with a pair of your cast-off bands."

"Bless the bairns! The one had been sick, and the other frolicsome," commented the imperturbable minister, probably, in his heart, relieving himself by a breath of the good-natured scorn vented on the fantastic progeny of bachelor and spinster; but he amended his reply with a sober bit of manliness, that discomfited even Mistress Peggy. "We are frail humanity, Lizzie and I are inconsistent enough; but it was the Lord that filled our quiver, and it is to our Master that we are answerable for the temper of the arrows. At the same time, Mistress Peggy, among great public concerns I behove to feel a near private interest in the affairs of my kinsmen. Will you tell me why young Eppie Melville is contrary to Captain Robert? He, a man of grace, virtue, and parts, a tall lad and a frank cheild, and come to honour on the seas. What would Eppie have more?"

"Mr. James, Eppie has been nurtured on the word itself, and the sound interpretation of the catechism. Ye ken, that examined her, whether or no *she was well drilled in her answers,*

and here she is, as sour a crab as if she had been rooted in vanity and ignorance. What excuse has she to set the lad Captain Robert's teeth on edge, but just that he is a tall lad, and has won renown on the seas? She says he's ower auld and grave and stern for her, and that his loud voice, which he has pitted against the winds and the waves, fears her, the twa-faced gypsey, and she would not ken what to do stuck up beside a brown sea-captain; she would be disturbed to dispose of both herself and him, as gin she were asked to sail with him, or would see him in her parlour more than once or twice in the year. Auld! he's but sax-and-twenty, and small chance that I would be so far left to mysel as to trust her to any beardless varlet."

"Tell her I had thought she had a more correct and elegant judgment than to prefer a youth to a man, or a silken courtier to a king's officer, a valorous man with a high charge over his fellows, a true man full of his work and his duty."

"Well said, James Melville. You'll speak to *her as in your office*, and bring her to her senses.

I'll have no fulish woman cast scaith at Robin, were it only for the sake of Captain Joshua."

"I respect your motives, madam," put in James Melville hastily, "but I decline the commission, that is, in my character of minister of the gospel; I will not be art and part in the confessional. What would my zealous uncle say to such back-sliding? But if you bring the lass in your train to the Manse of Anster, I can speak a friendly warning word to her as to a sister, in hopes that some other may do as fair a turn by my own two little wilful maidens—Annie and Lizzie—when I'll maybe be na longer to the fore, and out of right good will to Captain Robert, in memory of holidays that we have spent together."

Mistress Peggy was forced to be content with this support. Though she could turn all Crail round her finger, she was well aware she could not move Mr. James a hair's breadth beyond his conscience. Being a little discontented, however, and lively withal, she tackled him on another course.

"When we are getting sic a fine, quiet turn, and sic a leisurely twa-handed discourse, I maun put it to you, is it possible, Mr. James, what they

say of you: that you are so mad as to propose to break up your living, and gift awa your stipend, and let in two or three dominies that couldna find a footing for themselves, and who'll go over to the bishops as sure as they owe you their promotion, and a black grudge for their ain insufficiency?"

"Mistress Peggy, you're a woman of sense. I ask you how, if I can hardly overtake the seamen and the traders of the two Ansters, and read their souls leaf by leaf, I can hope to extend my task to the fishers of St. Monans, the merchants of Pittenweem, and the mingled ploughmen and boatmen of Kilrenny? If but one soul be missed out, woe to the shepherd, to the false, careless shepherd who lost the hundredth sheep!"

"But you micht have helpers, Mr. James, by the score; probationers, licentiates, and students would have been proud to serve an apprenticeship to sic a master, and they might have combined to labour under your countenance, but now they will slip your hands at once, and manage or mismanage the district to their hearts' content."

"*And mine, madam. God forgive you; would*

you have had me—me! Andrew Melville's nephew and pupil—play the bishop on the first temptation? Would you have had me deny the Book of Discipline? Are we not all presbyters—equals?

“You're both alike, sir, you and Mr. Andrew; you cast discretion to the winds. Wait a wee, no responsible person will stand by you. Think you the coast towns, wha got the scholar and gentleman, a sprout of the sound old tree of the Melvilles, will care to be paid off with some worthy enough lad Dury, or fire-flaught Davidson, or canny lad Carmichael, in your tried and trusty stead? Then there are your bairns, whom you are robbing by your prodigality, Mr. James; Mr. James you're reiving Mr. Andrew's bonnet—you may be godly, good, and clever, but you'll fan the flames of strife, for others cannot ettle to walk in your path, and so they maun stop your way and follow another road a' thegither—you're not fit for this world.”

James Melville stood still, planted the staff he carried in the soft sand; while the wind lifted *his thin hair*, and fanned his prominent

temples, his nostril at the same time swelling, his eye flashing, and his mouth trembling with emotion.

“Our master came not to bring unity but division. I have accepted a provision for myself and my household, so that I have not denied the faith, and been worse than an infidel, as you hint, madam. For anything more, I can trust myself, my wife and bairns, and every friend I love, to Him who feedeth the young ravens when they cry, and clotheth the lilies of the field in their beauty. God knows we may not have long to do with this heritage, we may be sent across the seas with better men, and, alas! by far worse powers than this mighty but mistaken Prince James, whom we hoped to see our sworn friend. I mind yet, Mistress Peggy,” continued Melville, melting into gentle recollections, “how I saw his Grace walking up and down in the auld Lady Mar’s hand, and heard him discourse ‘of knowledge and ignorance,’ to my great marvel, and how I, a stripling myself, held my prince ‘the sweetest sight in Europe that day, for strange and extraordinary gifts of ingyne, judgment, memory, and

language.' But that was in his ninth year, and now when he's reached to man's estate, they say, when he comes in from hunting, he can find no better pastime than drinking to his dogs; notwithstanding, I take blame to myself that I am driven to judge my king, who had a harsh enough rearing;—for his fair, beguiling, unhappy mother, within prison walls, still honoured my uncle Andrew, as he obeyed the hard carle, George Buchanan, and she has also spoken courteously to a mere country minister like me. Ah! Peggy, we urgent, unceremonious, unflattering divines of the kirk of Scotland, would fain love King Jamie, if he would but consent to a free kirk, and abide men who have a will of their own, and reason and some little learning, to oppose to his sovereign wisdom. Forgive the digression, Mistress Peggy; as for the people to whom king and college and kirk and the kirk's head appointed me, I trust they are not such fools as to fail to comprehend that a whole man is better than a quarter. Farther, as to what the world thinks of my judgment, and what you have alleged *against my worshipful uncle and me*, I

do not fear to say that we *are* men to cope with straits, and pioneer followers as the Red Indians lead the white men in the New World."

Mistress Peggy was vanquished, and actually betrayed into a burst of admiration. "Oh! you are a leal man, James Melville, and a faithful witness—but, oh! man, man, I would have been keen to see you at the top of the tree, at the head of a troop of black cloaks, marshalling them on to victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil, in this corner. Left to themselves, they'll pull different ways and fall asunder; make fules of themselves and a mess of the matter, and give ground for scandal. It's not to be thought that they'll all have so much as a preeing of the clear mind, the pure heart and the vigorous hand of John Knox and the Melvilles."

Mr. James turned away sorrowfully. "Oh, Mistress Peggy! as if we were not unprofitable servants with the rest; as if Knox never lifted his hand and cheered on what he would have given all he had to stop in the end; as if he never covenanted with those who proved his Master's *foes* as well as the kirk's false friends. Oh,

Mistress Peggy! to exalt the weak faulty vessels, and lose sight of the glorious principle."

But the old lady was incorrigible. "Ye sud have held the helm, James Melville; every seaman is not fit to steer; you'll rue your folly."

"Never, madam! though I had not a plack, and the king offered me one of his bishoprics—while I grant there be both pious and honest bishops in the sister kingdom—for myself I would refuse it that instant."

"Who spoke of bishoprics, Mr. James? You might have ruled, as you were called to do, without being a prelate."

"A tulchan bishop say you? The herd would do well to gore them, to see whether they are stuffed with flesh and blood, or chaff and straw; the same snare under another name, Mistress Peggy. For the surplice and the hood, the communion-rail and the altar, would stink as foully by different titles."

Mistress Peggy said no more, but it went against the grain to hear this levelling doctrine applied to her heroes.

The two were now strolling along the little

footpath that winds round the low bank, sheltered with a border of gorse, rather rare on the sea margin of the east coast, but which here feathered the hillocks that sloped to the white sands. Just beyond was the long serried ridge of the Car Rock, where many a goodly vessel had foundered in spite of the huge fire lit nightly on its summit, and whose warning flame afforded a name to the ship of this Captain Robert, who had yet been evilly attracted to his native shore.

“Didst ever think, Mr. James, one might find a carcanet or a ring, or a purse of broad pieces, washed up by this greedy foam?” suggested Mistress Peggy, peering down at the tide.

Mr. James was bound to say he had found her dreams too mercenary already, so he behoved to solemnise them by substituting an opposite vision. “Rather the brainless skull or the bony hand of one of its thousands of skeletons.”

“Preserve us! I wouldna wish to find it,” responded Mistress Peggy, with a shudder; “though, poor human wreck! it wouldna take a bite of me,” she added, recovering herself promptly. At the same time it was clear that she had more heart

to confront a living Spaniard with her blunderbuss, than his bleached bones, unarmed save by her faith.

“What heaps and heaps of them there maun be down there, Mr. James. I cannot help whiles thinking that Captain Joshua may be added to them, in place of lying beside the Hays, the Learmonts, the Areskines, the Lumsdeans, and the Melvilles, in our ain kirkyard.”

“He is in the Lord’s hand, my dear Mistress Peggy,” remarked Mr. James, gently; and she bent her head gratefully and reverently.

“We’ll have an oncome soon, Mistress Peggy,” said Mr. James, after a pause, “I feel it already, it is too late in the season for thunder, it will be a drenching mist and a tearing gale. Thank God the fishing is over. Ay, it was not for nothing Kellie Law was so chary of his countenance yesterday.”

Mistress Peggy stood erect, and snuffed the symptoms of mischief defiantly. “Nae sic thing, Mr. James; you aye grued at a breath of wind after a summer day, and maun have a fire, I’ll wager, in your study at Anster, long after the end of May,

and before the close of November. I thought a wise man like you would have known that—

“When Kelly Law puts on his cap
Largo Law may laugh at that.”

“In truth, madam,” said Mr. James, “and—

“When Largo Law fits on his hat
Kelly Law may look to that.

I beg to inform you both hills were eclipsed yesterday.”

Mistress Peggy executed a provoked “Humph!” and suggested, ironically, that they had better get back to the town ere the “scarroch” commenced, and also, that she would have barely time to reach Widow Auchterlonie’s, with her duds, before the hour of noon, when she prayed Mr. James to ask a blessing, and eat a bit of her dinner.

Mr. James excused himself on the ground that John Melville’s spouse had his plate set. He was nothing loth to terminate the promenade, and be restored to his vanishing rhymes. But the couple parted very cordially at the entrance of the street, to which Mr. James had courteously returned with his old damsel—Mistress Peggy murmuring to her-

self " James Melville, you're the beggar's brother for all your wit and lear ; but it's not that that will render you least in the kingdom of heaven ; " and Melville reflecting, " I did not deserve your blows, Mistress Peggy, but they were not very sore, seeing they were dealt by no malicious hand. My would-be-worldly old lady, I'll have more space for thee at Anster, and if I do not bring thee round to my notions, I'll at least convince thee that I've a fondness for thy wrinkles, above most lines of beauty. I can dote on thy service to thy neighbour, and thy anxiety about young Eppie, and thy tenderness to meek little Captain Joshua—whom thou wouldst rear into a Samson or a Goliath, while nature cast him and me, in stature, no bigger than Zaccheuses—more than on a world of airs and graces, compliments and condescensions."

II.—THE STORM AND ITS UNEXPECTED CONSEQUENCES.

James Melville was right in his prognostications. A gale was rising, such as frequently swept the coast, and strewed it with wrecks. It roared among

the old chimneys of Mistress Peggy's house, and up and down her wide staircases and passages ; it hissed in its rapid accumulation of spray on the thick, small-lozenged window panes, and whistled angrily in at the shaking wooden framework. It is possible that Mistress Peggy affected not to hear it, since she astounded young Eppie by denominating it a chance puff of air, when she complained of the soot descending in the midst of her pastry. The pilots, retired captains, and idle sailors, were already lounging down to the pier, with heads inclined scientifically so as to balance bonnet or cap on shaggy hair without support—a performance which no land-lubber, accustomed to faint zephyr stealing round the lee of a solid hill, could hope to emulate. But Mistress Peggy would not admit the fact of a storm, until James Melville rode by unflinchingly through the gathering blast he had anticipated, to his manse in the Tolbooth wynd of Anstruther. “That wilful lad,” she said, “he’ll be wet to the skin, or slung from the saddle.”

“Madam,” spoke Captain Robert, consolingly, “I’ve walked the quarter-deck in a stiffer wind, *and had the spray on every side, and ne’er*

been a grain the worse for the airing and the ducking."

"And though you had been as ill as you could be, Captain Robert," said Mistress Peggy, rather pettishly, "that would have been a sma' matter to James Melville's being in the least degree mazed, or chilled, or spent in an autumn tempest."

"I believe it," averred the big, brown, young man, with some earnestness; "a sea-calf is not to be compared to a lion; but I'll away to the harbour-head, where I can be of use in my own calling." And with a gusty sigh, heard even above the tempest, and certainly directed in no way to Mistress Peggy, he quitted the apartment.

This Captain Robert, or Robin Scrymgeour, was only a young man of about five-and-twenty, but by exposure and hard work on the sea, he looked as though middle-aged. He was a square, sun-burnt, imperative man. Loud, unceremonious, and peremptory, as his profession disposed him to be, he was an autocrat on deck; still he was decidedly soft in one region of the heart, and shy and sensitive, as well as ardent. Poor Captain Robert had the disadvantage of possessing a case which did

not well correspond with his inner works. It was difficult to conceive the big, brusque, unconsciously noisy man as ever being bashful, tender, and touching. No one could look in his broad, frank, fearless face, or answer his unhesitating, hearty hail, without feeling that he was a worthy man, and one probably endowed with both bodily and mental health and activity; but one would never have thought of associating delicacy and fancy with him more than with an elephant. Now Captain Robert, though he had never even named the qualities to himself or to the rest of the world, had some delicacy and fancy; and one proof of this was that he felt keenly, at present, his own surface defects, and began, thus late in the day, to regret bitterly his rough and old-looking exterior. "She'll have naught to say to a man who looks like a widower of forty; and what grace can I command, to approach her with smiles, and bows, and soft words, when my cheek is as dark as mahogany, and my very beard is more bushy than Captain Joshua's, and my lightest footfall shakes the room, and all my sentences form themselves into *orders and commands?*"

It was all the worse for Captain Robert that young Eppie Melville was acting in perfect sincerity and ingenuousness, while their mutual relatives and friends would have had the banns published off-hand between the man and woman as an exceedingly fit pair, since they were both members of the righteous kirk, and the one a Scrymgeour, the other a Melville.

Unfortunately, young Eppie was not of this mind, as she sat on the bunker or window-seat of her aunt's parlour at Crail, darning—a very necessary operation for which ladies of every age must then have occasionally intermitted their wheels, distaffs, and spindles, prick-song and embroidery, while the windy weather prevailed.

Young Eppie was a beautified edition of Mistress Peggy; looking at the one, you could revive the young life of the other. Eppie, too, was big and large-featured, but so sonsy (*Anglicé*, plump) and so fair that there was nothing unwomanly in her size. How could there be? When were there ever such peach-like cheeks? There was positively a pearly bloom on them, like the impalpable *soft mealiness* on the grape and the plum.

In this same fairness there was a youthfulness that only faded when the tender rose grew into the streaked red which yet kindled Mistress Peggy's high cheek bones. Perhaps there would have been a babiness about that pure, creamy bloom, had it not been for the decided features, and their decided expression.

Still Eppie was no queen, any more than Captain Robert was an ogre. But in spite of her bulk, she had a pleasant liveliness, even amid the gravity of a Scotch presbyterian household. She had a foot as light as ever danced a saraband, if the General Assembly and Mistress Peggy would have allowed profane dancing; and an arch humour, too, though she had been bred in an atmosphere of sermons, and had a liking for them, as a good, unsophisticated girl likes what she imagines is wholesome and profitable, even when she cannot always rise to its presumed earnestness. A constant association with these had melted and lightened whatever was hard, stern, dry and dark at a distance, and shaped them into the familiar habits of a reasonably happy young life; run them into *the trained* channels and guided currents of

thought and feeling, of a simple, intelligent, and sensible mind.

Eppie was open and affectionate, but wilful, and a little mischievous within bounds. It was true that from the years that she had tottered at her aunt's foot she had been reared to meditate and to confer kindness; to think not for herself alone, but for others; and to aim, however weakly, at justice, mercy, and holiness. But for all that, she was a little wilful, and had a small store of repressed fun; and, to complete her character, she was rather ignorant of human nature and her own capacity, and tolerably blinded to Captain Robert's real merits, and what she might gain or lose in him. This was a pity, but it was not a marvel.

Eppie was not Captain Joshua's daughter; she was the child of another brother of Mistress Peggy's—a brother the old lady had contended with all his violent life, and nursed fondly on his quiet death-bed. The girl was thus completely an orphan, and entirely under Mistress Peggy's tutelage; but she paid her maiden aunt a higher compliment than to allow her to make her miserable.

So she was undignified enough to peep slyly after Captain Robert, as he went out, for the purpose of saying satirically, quite low to herself—"He rolls like a grampus. Now! what would I do with a brown sea-captain? I've enough ado to keep myself cheery and perform my duty, without plaguing myself with sic a terrific burden. If I'm ever to have a man of my ain, he maun be gracious and learned like our Master James, or at least, easy and pleasant like that sorry young Learmont. Why should the sinners always win the ball for pleasantness? The Apostle bids us be courteous, and is aye minding us to rejoice, but we're ower stark and ower dowff to heed his injunctions. I'll wait till I meet a gude man, and a soft-tongued, young, brisk, and bonny ane like mysel', an' such as Mistress Peggy hersel' sometimes thinks there's no ill in singing about. But let them say or do what they will, our ballants will go on hand in hand with our psalms; they are often doleful enough to be clean out of the category of light sangs. I'll not ballast myself with a great, roaring sea-captain."

The gale rose with the night tide and blew in

those trumpet blasts and sudden fierce roars that presage the wildest of coast storms. The sea raised its voice, and all Crail echoed with the tumult of earth and sky, until by the early morning few lay abed, but hurried up and out to learn what damage had been done, but principally to look on the tossed, tormented sea, all bare, save where some poor vessel, with naked poles, scudded on the crests of the seething waves, fretted already with sad tokens, and bringing in a harvest the most mournful that human avarice can claim.

There was reason enough that Crail should be astir this October morning. One ship had been laid on the Car Rock, and then lifted up and driven in upon the town, and was now being beaten to fragments; and another was still holding off, and making for Anstruther, round the breakers off the point. Captain Robert had been aroused, by break of day, to lend his skill and strength. Even Mistress Peggy, though this was the very day she was to travel to Anstruther to await her beloved brother Captain Joshua, donned her hood, and hurried with her niece, and the whole popula-

tion of Crail—man, woman, and child—to witness the disaster and its end. Had the wind not begun to lull, this would have been impossible for the weaker portion of the community ; but being possible, they availed themselves of it instantly. It is to be feared they had an appetite for wrecks, even the most disinterested and righteous of them. Wrecks were their spectacles, their crop of romance, excitement and passion, and they awoke such instincts and emotions as the old tournaments and bear fights had not reached. Men looked on the peril and read a new page of life ; women came, wept, trembled, prayed, and underwent what was dimly akin to a second birth ; boys gazed and gazed, ran in among their elders and eagerly read their looks, words and acts, and were first faintly conscious of the troubled depths of their future manhood. When, as in this instance, the ship was strange to them, they could enter into the drama and perform their part in it without the distraction of personal care, or the distress of neighbourly concern. If Mistress Peggy, on the earliest announcement of the accident, had any sickening misgivings pointing to the “Lord Henry” and Captain Joshua,

they were soon dispersed by ocular demonstration ; and if they lingered with the old lady in contemplating the fury of the storm, and sharpened her interest in those exposed to its worst, she said nothing of her private doubts and fears. In truth, notwithstanding her spirit and strength, it required all Mistress Peggy's breath to supply her lungs as she stood in the place of honour on the shore, respectfully backed by two of the principal men in Crail—the innkeeper and the mercer—with the minister, Mr. John Melville, at one elbow, and Eppie Melville fluttering at the other.

An east coast gale must be the likeliest to a hurricane of anything in Britain. Few would believe the extent of its power if they had not fought it, or been foiled by it in pitched battle.

The storm spends itself for the principal hours of its duration in prolonged gusts that rush with the concentration of a blast in a Highland gorge, and actually oppose a solid violence to the toiling wayfarer. This incensed, unappeasable opponent, is further strengthened by the wrack with which it is laden, and which can be plainly seen by

the eye—a stream or reversed pillar of vapour approaching to engulf the traveller, the nearest to a water spout or the sandy whirlwind of the desert of all the wide phenomena of nature. This wrack divides at its edge into the minutest dust of rain, which, mingling with the lashed spray, and the shifting sand, and the flecks of foam, renders the air dense, and enwraps the whole wild stage of the seashore where the breakers are thundering, and where the central figure of a ship stretched in sad motionlessness, or only quivers now and then from stem to stern, until at length one mightier sea-wolf than the rest springs on its side, and rebounds again howling.

The ship, though unknown, was not of foreign build, yet the seamen swore she was manned by foreigners, as they neither comprehended nor answered signals. Her crew was very numerous for her size, too; for they clustered like bees fore and aft, while she was fixed on the shore, and the waves shook and twisted and ground her rib from rib. Had she not swung inland, head foremost, with an impetus that launched her far in shore, and *had the tide not been low*, she would have been

under water long before a man could come out of Crail to her aid. As it was, the tide was rising, and her danger was every moment on the increase.

At the mention of foreigners, there had been a significant glance and pause, and the fatal word Armada trembled on several tongues. But Captain Robert summoned the best men to follow him, and the appeal stirred other feelings in them. No boat could live down there ; for the great sea billows, broken by the cruel rock, where the spray fell again like a linn, did not so much advance rank by rank, as bubbled and raged, and lashed each other like demons. But there was a hope of shooting a rope through the surf, and by that narrow causeway landing the drowning crew. For this purpose picked men advanced as far as possible into the water, and endeavoured to cast the line where it could be caught by those on board the vessel.

This is not so dangerous a service as the attempt to rescue by a boat, but it is sufficiently hazardous, and very striking in its features to the anxious eyes of the *spectators*. Five or six men formed a chain,

and waded hand in hand into the turmoil. Their progress was sickeningly slow; and they stood and yielded at intervals, while wind and water, as if infuriated by their courage and coolness, whirled and spouted against them with fresh violence. Homely, curt, careless fellows, they think nothing of their deed, even when they feel their feet slipping from beneath them; and they have seen, ere now, some of their number hurried off as in a chariot. One man breaks the slender chain, and advances alone. He is chief in muscle and nerve, or he has the responsibility of command. If that swaying line, which shows like a thread against the roused elements, is fixed, what will hinder it even then from snapping—exposed to so fearful a strain? And if it snaps, away go the men who are paying it out and those who are clinging to it as to salvation.

Captain Robert was the man who cast the rope to the ship on the shore at Crail, and well for him that his stature was full, his sturdy vigour established, and his presence of mind and authority acquired. He stood singly in advance; he made *the throws*, under which even his balance wavered,

and he caught again the rope when it fell wide of the mark. The spray went over and over him, and round and round him, and whether it blinded him or no, it blinded the spectators. Once it dragged him down, and he swam for a minute and a half till he regained his depth. No Hercules could have struck out five minutes in that whirlpool. Once again he was dragged down, and an eager shout arose, "Come back, Captain Robert, you're over venturesome; you'll be swamped as sure as you're alive." The whole crowd held their breath for him, counted his feats, and blessed his gallantry.

Mistress Peggy did not turn away, she gazed steadfastly, and murmured through her shrivelled lips, "Robin, Robin Scrymgeour, you're playing the man this day." She envied him. When he succeeded in his aim, and a great shout on shore joined the faint cheer of the seamen on board, Mr. John Melville, the minister of Crail, who was holding converse with the infirmity and timorousness of age, bared his white head to the blast, and uttered aloud a thanksgiving and a petition for *further protection*, and the people joined silently in

his prayer with a hush of reverent faith, and glistening, grateful eyes.

Poor young Eppie's feelings were roused to the utmost pitch. At first she had plucked her aunt energetically by the gown, and sobbed out, white and scared—"Let me gang hame, auntie, I canna stand to see it."

"Stay where you are, bairn," Mistress Peggy answered, emphatically, "and learn the vanity of life."

"But, auntie," groaned Eppie again in a few moments, forced by the torture she was undergoing to be explicit, "I cannot bide it, sinçe—since Captain Robert is the foremost man. You ken, you ken I've no right to watch him, clasp my hands and set my teeth till he come back—though I never meant to abuse him, and it was not my wyte, you ken, auntie; I dare not witness his danger, or his destruction."

"I command you not to lift a foot, Eppie Melville; if you stir from my side, I'll send some of the menfolk after you. It serves you weel, you vain lass, and you shall see what stuff gude Robin Scrymgeour's made of before he is done with you, *as he ought to have been lang syne.*"

So Eppie had no resource left her but to stand and look. Soon eager curiosity and tremulous interest robbed her of the cowardly impulse to escape the contemplation of his triumph ; for now Captain Robert triumphed over every detractor. Who could call to mind his roughness and loudness, and heavy set manhood, while he stood there with his life in his hand for the sake of his neighbour? Who could waste a thought on the absence of lightness and elegance, in the immediate presence of the stern realities of life and death?

But Eppie remembered distinctly her own objections to Captain Robert on these counts—her own flouts at his awkwardness and unwieldiness. She remembered how she had clouded his clear eyes with reproach by running away from his company to the psalm singing, and had dulled his best narrative by her indifference when he spun his yarns to her Auntie Peggy and Mr. John Melville over the lamp, by the hearth, or at supper. And he had never blamed her ; but had laboured to make himself less loud and gruff, if not less big and brown. He had attended to her whims, and *courted her with every conceivable gift from his*

stores. But she scorned to be propitiated by them, and would even have returned them if she could have dared. He was her kinsman, however, and Mistress Peggy was in the way, and she had no choice but to receive, and then disparage and neglect them. He had forgotten her now, as he stood there swinging and rocking as he had never swung and rocked in his hammock ; he had, for the moment, forgotten his mistress, and the pain she had cost him, and would have been impatient to be reminded of her, as men turn from women in their peculiar combats. Yes, he loved her, he knew that too well ; but he was a man, and must do his duty ; she should not come between him and it. It would be hard, if after embittering all else, she should thwart him here.

But there was no cause why Eppie should forget ; and she remembered all, and with notable results. First, she prayed with all her heart to the merciful God not to punish her lightness and foolishness, by slaying her cousin, Captain Robert, in his nobleness, before her eyes. Then she said to herself, that she had *not known* Captain Robert in his bravery and

gallantry, and she had not dreamt how proud she should be of his deeds. She would listen to no other suitor, wed no likelier man. How could she give the preference to a glib tongue, a smooth courtesy, a red and white cheek like her own, when she had seen Captain Robert thus faithfully risk his life for strangers. The heroic vision would rise and humble her in all ordinary circumstances. Oh! she wished Captain Robert could receive her resolutions and hear her vow.

Thirdly—and this was when Captain Robert swam that minute and a half, buffetting those water mountains—Eppie suddenly struck her colours and laid down her arms. In her desperation she cried, unheard by any mortal it is true, but registered in her own soul and conscience: “I will wed you, Captain Robert; I’ll never say you nay again, man; I’ll go before the minister to-morrow, if you’ll but come back to dry land.”

It is the privilege of honest, upright, godly men and women that, however they may swerve or waver on occasions, their inclinations, in place of mastering their faith, become its hand-maidens *when it is once fairly roused and called into*

action. Was it impossible young Peggy should be thus conquered? No more than many a generous man, looking on a poor woman who has passed through a fight of afflictions, longs for that reason to make her his own.

The fact was, the moment Eppie took that magnanimous resolution, her cheeks began to burn less painfully, and her heart to throb less overpoweringly. She could exert her eyes and ears again; indeed, her sight and hearing seemed to have been magically touched by some precious ointment, as when Cinderella underwent the touch of the fairy's kind wand. Captain Robert, among the waves, looked grand and goodly, a man for a silly woman to be proud of and to cherish upon her knees. His face, when he turned it for a second, was as dauntless and as true a face as could give comfort and protection to a weak woman; and his voice, when he shouted his orders, was as sweet in its persistence, as it was manly in its power.

But the chance of withdrawing her protest, and allowing her consent, was not swift to come. *There was Captain Robert still straining every*

nerve, and perilling his valuable life to relieve his fellow-creatures, in perfect ignorance of her intention. She felt it would be so hard if he should never learn it, so dreadful if, his delusion unbroken, he should fall a sacrifice. And she felt that now she was bound to interfere, when for the third or fourth time he traversed the rope with his passengers. They were so slow, those stupid, staggered, slight-built strangers. With dilating, beseeching eyes, she appealed for the last time to her aunt. "Must he continue to go? Is he to be worn out? Will no person take Captain Robert's place, or is he to get his death of cold, if he be not clutched by some drowning man, or swallowed up by the hindmost wave?"

Mistress Peggy shook her off afresh, though this time more gently: "Whisht! ye silly bairn, Captain Robert is the captain, and that tow is his vessel—a captain never quits the ship till every living soul is delivered. I, mysel, would not suner leave my house in the circumstances." Young Eppie could have stamped with impatience, and then cried with contrition and fear. But at length

the weary task was ended ; Captain Robert escorted his last half-helpless charge over his gangway, and staggered on shore himself. The Crail men raised some plaudits for their captain, since the step between them and eternity had again widened out to a lifetime. But then came cold glances and rising murmurs against the rescued crew—a swarm of dark-haired, sallow-faced men, with oddly-cut jerkins, high hats, and long beards. Out of the jaws of the great deep, they were hovering on the brink of another danger. What business had such as they near the coast, when men were looking for the Armada? The Armada! the word was a test; stop them! pinion them! gag them! apply to them their own tortures. Think of the cursed Inquisition, and the peaceful British subjects—the faithful Protestants—burnt at the stake like savage Red Indians. The shipwreck on the Car Rock was perhaps a feint of the Spaniard, the pope, and the devil, to procure a landing! Rather set on them and dispatch them where they stood, before they had time to recover their cunning and their doggedness, than tamper with invasion.

But Captain Robert interfered and allayed the sudden panic. Soaked and draggled from head to foot, and thoroughly chilled and exhausted, he gasped out, bluntly and overbearingly, that it was his affair, that these men were in his keeping, and that he was inclined to consult Mr. James Melville and my Lord Kelly on their disposal. He had communicated with their captain, and, in the meantime, he should lodge them, and command them to be refreshed. When some opposition presented itself to his orders, Captain Robert, notwithstanding his long bath, waxed warm, touched his own sword, indicated that only two or three of the strangers were armed, and finally banned the burghers for base cowardly loons, if they dared to contradict his orders, or interfere with his prerogative. He could hardly be said to reason, but then he hectored like a brave man who had played his part, and like an unsophisticated man who never doubted his right to dictate terms. The stiff, pugnacious townsmen looked glum, and muttered a little, but they bent to the claims of gentle birth, the influence of the Melvilles, and the deeds of Captain Robert. The

waifs he had rescued were stowed away safely enough, both as regarded themselves and the townspeople, for they were locked into the empty church, which the zealous mob had stripped, and in which they were yet to sign the Covenant amidst tears and prayers, and the most solemn oaths ever nation swore.

III.—THE HERO'S REWARD.

Captain Robert in his beaver, and with dry hose and doublet, prepared to start for Anstruther. "Tush! its a daft emergence," he protested, not caring to be praised, and certainly a little spent with his efforts, though he would hardly own it. He was perfectly unconscious of the change of fortune that was awaiting him. This was no time to approach him with overtures, and Eppie grew frightened and anxious. It was a comfort that they were to travel in company, for no fatigue or stress of weather would induce Mistress Peggy to fail in her appointment, when Captain Joshua was expected in port. Even *on that howling, tempestuous day*, roads were

open, and sure-footed East Neuk beasts paced them, and hardy East Neuk folks journeyed to their destination.

It was a simple cavalcade. Mistress Peggy, in her hat and mantle, sat on a pillion behind one of her old, stolid, sure Carnbee men, on a work-day horse. She travelled so seldom now-a-days, that she indulged in no palfrey. Eppie rode on her own brisk pony, which she managed perfectly, and Captain Robert, who, being a cadet of family, rode indifferently well for a sailor, was mounted on a fresh horse, hired from the Arskine Arms, of size to suit his own proportions. He towered above his companions, and though he was in such good company, seemed, shame upon him! eager for the road, and perplexed and abstracted, rather than attentive and painstaking, as had been his wont. Eppie did not know what to make of him, and it appeared to grow more and more difficult to proffer to him a hint of her soft relenting. She was nervous, she was not herself; yet she was more fascinating in her soul-breathing heats and tremours, than in the undimmed, un-

moved lustre of her fairness and stateliness. But that horrid, brown sea-captain, only made to strive for drowning men, or stamp up and down on deck, or blurt out his truthfulness, and blush, got no benefit by this "lovely woman's agitation."

In his old white Manse, in the Tolbooth Wynd of Anstruther, James Melville, through the sough and shriek of the wind and the dash of the waves, dreamt of his captive kirk, the lady of his vision, and slept away the fatigues of his daily duties. His surroundings were not very congenial. His lodging was penned into a narrow space, and so imprisoned by stone and lime, that even the fresh breeze of the free, restless sea, and the redeeming glory of the bleak coast view were denied. The poet's heart must have longingly anticipated the steep-roofed country house in the wide garden, with the far view over the harbour with its shipping, and the shining sea—the beloved retreat of the watch-tower, which he had then dimly planned, which he afterwards built, and which, after he had dwelt in its chambers for *many* years, and stamped and embalmed it

with associations of his public and private life, he renounced when his step was lagging slow, and his soft hair was wasted from his temples, though he was still, as he said, "not old, but elderly."

But he was not dependent on circumstances, and he was yet far removed from the time when he bowed his erect head in sickness and despondency. To James Melville the commonplace was not common, but had its own quiet, hidden, still beauty, more refreshing in its shade than effulgence, and more delicate in its unobtrusiveness than the picturesque.

At this moment, he was rather rudely roused from his slumbers by the startling announcement that the Baillies of Anster waited to have speech of him anent a matter of mighty importance to the burgh.

"Ah, James, it is the Spaniard at last!" cries Elizabeth, sitting up in her pure night-dress, not forgetting even at that moment to put out her hand to rock the cumbrous cradle with the ever-wakeful baby. "The Lord's will be done!" she sighed, and *only* added, "Sir, where would you

have me dispose of the bairns?" for she never dreamt of cumbering, far less of controlling, her husband.

"The stranger's room maun be your stronghold, Lizzie, because it looks to the back. Hold! there is the milk-house, with only a boll of a window to admit the shot. Lock yourself in there, my woman, when you hear the din; the bairns, poor things, will be pacified with a soup of the cream, and I'll come to you, my dear, as soon as I can."

"You'll not waste yourself upon me, James Melville," quavered the faithful woman; "I'll have licht to read a verse, and I'll pray."

"Ay, pray Lizzie, in your closet, and I'll pray in the stour of the streets; and our cry will go up through the strife of men into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."

"But, minister," urged a disturbed voice at the door, "the Armada has come to us in a strange pickle. This is a shipload of distressed men, whose vessel foundered off the Fair Isle in the Orkneys, and who obtained a bark and came here, not to carry fire and sword, but to crave mercy *to save them* from perishing of hardship and want."

“Now our Lord hath delivered the Amalekites blindfold and bound into our hands,” cried James Melville, “that we might slay and spare not. Agag never went more delicately than their Philip. Expound unto each of them this text, my brethren—‘As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women.’”

I do not mean to represent James Melville as faultless. By no means. He was of those ministers of the Kirk of Scotland to whose fervent spirits the clear, stern legislation of Geneva, with its virtues and its errors, came home as being akin to their own grave, earnest natures. To their minds they had received “the belt of correction” and the keys of the Church. Of some of them it could be written, “The gown nae sooner off, and the Bible out of hands frae the kirk, when on gaed the corselet; and fangit was the hacquebut, and to the field.” These words, spoken by Regent Morton, have their meaning :—“There will never be quietness in the country till half a dozen of you be hanged or banished the country.” To whom Andrew Melville answered, “Tush, sir, it is the same to me whether I rot in *the air* or in the ground. The earth is

the Lord's. * * * * It will not be in your power to hang or exile His truth."

These men had scattered the hives and freed themselves from the shaveling monks and friars by main force, which had its cost, as yonder ancient St. Andrew's and its piles could tell; they were threatened with a reaction which, to their excited consciences, was the fatal looking back that would blast their redemption. The tender souls among all classes were now like James Melville pausing to hide the thoughtless boys and girls "playing in the streets," and the sucking child at the mother's breast, from the murderous Spaniard. Did you expect them to be upon ceremony, or to testify perfect meekness? James Melville, notwithstanding his hereditary ardour and intrepidity, was reckoned patient, considerate, and peculiarly benevolent. On this account he was regularly chosen as moderator, president, and truce-bearer in the encounters of his generation. But even James Melville did not belie his name, or fail to exhibit that vehemence which, however tempered and chastened, ran hot in his blood as in the rash veins of *Mr. Andrew*, who yet scorned to retain the recollec-

tion of personal injury, and freely forgave and generously solaced his bitterest foes.

The baillie's homely features blazed for a moment with the evil light kindled in James Melville's face, then the glow relaxed, and his honest lip trembled with uncertainty—

“The commanders had landed bare-headed and with sheathed swords. We ordered them to their ships again. They humbly obeyed, and, Mr. James, their fellows are for the most part young, beardless men—silly, trauchled, and hungered.”

“Silly, trauchled, and hungered!—the ravishers and idolatrous foreign invaders! Was this their invincibility?” Yea, but it was invincibility. James Melville stared blankly, his eyes fell, his stout heart smote him painfully. He bade his friend convene the responsible men of the town in the Tolbooth close by his door, and hurried to join them. There, amongst curious, doubtful, frowning looks, was that very reverent man of big stature and great grace, and grey-haired, ay, grey-headed enough to have been James Melville's father. Unless James Melville had started back and prevented him, he *would in his low obeisance*, which yet was not with-

out a certain dignity and loftiness, have touched the minister's feet as well as the ground with his bearded lip. Then began that most stately and sorrowful harangue, spoken in Spanish, to James Melville by this Jan Gomez de Medina, general of twenty hulks, his jewelled orders on his breast, the medallion of his ruthless, ambitious king round his neck.

Long before he attempted to answer in Latin the old man's speech, Melville's heart had melted like water. Thus James Melville's preamble was short. He explained with his frankness and sincerity, "that their friendship would not be very great, seeing that the Spaniards and their king were friends to the greatest enemy of Christ—the Pope of Rome; while we with our king defend not him, nor yet his cause, but were against it." But there was all fulness of mercy and toleration in his conclusion. "Nevertheless," he said, "you shall find by experience that we are men, and so moved by human compassion. For whereas our people resorting among the Spaniards in peaceable manner, and for lawful affairs of merchandise, were taken, *cast into prison*, their goods and gear confiscated,

and their bodies committed to the fire for the cause of religion, they should find nothing here but Christianity and works of mercy, *and always leaving to God to work in their hearts concerning religion, as it pleased Him.*"

For this noble reply Don Jan Gomez gave thanks, and said, no doubt justly, that he could not answer for their kirk, and the laws and orders of it, but only for himself; that there were divers Scotsmen who knew him, and to whom he had shown courtesy and favour at Cadiz, and he supposed some of this same town of Anstruther.

The baillies granted license to the commander and his captains to obtain refreshment, and they departed in contentment till the overlord of Anstruther and the neighbouring gentry were advertised of the marvel.

A throng was round Mr. James—a throng of agitated men, with whom, in place of urging the example of Samuel and Agag, he pled in the words of the prophet Elisha to the king of Israel, when the blinded Syrians opened their eyes in Samaria: "*Thou shalt not smite them;*" "Set bread and water

before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master;" "And he prepared great provision for them." In the midst of Mr. James's lecture, which these worthy men of Anster interpreted readily, Captain Robert knocked with his riding-whip at the Tolbooth door, and Mistress Peggy's riding-skirt fluttered down the street. Mr. James shrugged his shoulders—"I must be able to impress my relentings at my ain hearth, else Mistress Peggy will play my Lady Makgill of Rankeillour, and I will be forced to banish her belyve out of my hearing."

But Captain Robert also told his tale, and to his great relief Mr. James wrung his hand in token of the utmost sympathy—"You have done well, sir, you have excelled. I envy you that you were sent to deliver them. I have no fear of my kinswoman since she has cast een on their grievous plight, and trembled for their near destruction. Aha! Mistress Peggy, there is no word of the blunderbuss now, but of roaring fires and warm duds and cordial drinks to heap on the head of the foe."

Mistress Peggy was ready at his call. "Mr. James, I would scorn to strike a fallen man. Poor lads, poor lads! they are far frae their mothers and

sisters; drowning the ae moment, in durance the next, and it's a lang word to hame. Eppie, bestir yoursel, ye selfish lass; what can we do to comfort these forlorn and desolate men?"

Mr. James chose for that evening's homily—not the blessed text: "If thine enemy hunger, feed him," for that would have seemed to savour of the self-commendation which "in privity" his soul abhorred—but the conscience-stricken address of David to Abigail: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me." "Blessed be thou which has kept me from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand."

Ere evening, there was a grand gathering in Anstruther. The arrivals were such as caused Mistress Peggy and her niece, and even shy Mrs. Melville to put themselves in proper apparel, shake out their wimples and their standing collars, fasten the jewelled drops to the band above the brow, and the ouches on their girdle. Yet, it is true, young Eppie's gaze was wondrously distraught and dim from a window in the principal street, *where they could enjoy the rare sight of so*

many old friends, and the general show of horse and rider, groom and hound, as they defiled to the grim Tolbooth door.

Some merry young lads were following the captain, mimicking his formal seat in the saddle, and eagerly coveting his early renown. By a peculiar coincidence the two boys who were capering most lightly and jauntily were the lineal descendants of Thomas Learmont of Ercildown, and Michael Scott of Balwearie. There, too, was the green sprout of Sir David Balfour, another lord of session, from Randerstone, hard by the sea, and there was a representative of the Monypennys of Pitmilley, by Pitmilley Burn, proverbial for producing statesmen of distinction both at home and in France. There flourished a Cunningham of the Cunninghams of Kilmaurs, Earls of Glencairn, from the barn-like house of the Barnes, to whom belonged the pleasant but profitless Isle of May; and a Sandilands from the Castle of St. Monans or Newark, set upon a solid rock in the sea—this Sandilands, yet to be created Lord Abercromby, was bred of the house of Torphichen, of whom you *read in the life of John Knox.*

Mistress Peggy looked, admired, and nodded her head, with its ponderous pile, which rose like a beehive in the centre, with fans at each side. "A pretty sight! It minds me of what my mother was wont to tell of the grand gala day when Queen Mary, our luckless Mary's mother, landed at Balcomie Point, and every laird and lady of the East Neuk rode in her train to St. Andrew's to meet my lord the king."

Mistress Peggy did not care to mention another procession she had beheld. This October gathering did not remind her (how could it?) of that rush of white-faced, silent or deep-voiced men and women, whose agony and rage of sympathy did not prevent them hurrying to St. Andrew's to see Mr. George Wishart seal his creed, and Cardinal Beatoun receive the document. Yet the old lady remembered it—how she remembered it! It had been the climax and turning-point to a life then young, and almost gorgeous in its bloom.

But the autumn afternoon was drawing to an end. The gentlemen about Anstruther having dined at *noon* and finished their sitting, were

thinking of riding cannily home again, or dropping aside into little convivial parties, to eat their supper, and, it is to be feared, depart from the straight road of sobriety, by entering upon those orgies which King Jamie himself, highly decorous in other respects, always countenanced, and which neither Knox nor Melville, for all their wise kindly moderation in meat and drink, could quell.

These Fife gentlemen were nevertheless brave men and honourable, and could not disgrace themselves by a dastardly revenge. They rather experienced a merciful or a supercilious satisfaction in extending charity to this strange and stray debarkation of the Armada. So my lord of Anstruther carried off Don Jan Gomez de Medina to taste his high hospitality, and half-a-dozen more gregarious lairds trotted home in the gale to consult their puzzled dames, and make arrangements for similar receptions. But the main body were stowed in the Tolbooth, which had just been used as a council-chamber, and somewhat like wild beasts did the dark-eyed, *long-haired*, southern-tongued strangers appear,

peeped at as they were, half-curiously, half in scorn, by the townsfolk.

Eppie Melville amongst the rest, would see the strangers. So Captain Robert took the girl a little discontentedly, for he said to himself with irritable jealousy: "Now, I would not wonder, though my lass were taken with a craze for these wrecked prisoners—women aye side with the weak and vanquished, and the more wizened and ill-conditioned they are, perhaps the women are all the readier to be smitten. But she maun have her way."

Eppie walked round the dismal guard-room, and glanced shyly at the olive-skins, the lustrous eyes, the slender limbs, and the emphatic gestures, and picked out the chief men, as much by their proud look and endurance and composure as by their scarfs and rings. And the gallant Spaniards gazed in their turn, and were charmed at the tall fair beauty, so statue-like, but rose-tinged as if the setting sun had shot its last rays on the snow of her cheeks, perhaps fancying at the same time with what a noble motion she would tread in their dances, how her long firm fingers would swing *and crack* the castanets.

“They are comely youths, though they be black and slim, Captain Robert,” whispered Eppie.

Captain Robert groaned and shouldered his bulk. “They are new-fangled, Eppie,” he muttered, scornfully.

“I’m wae for them, Captain Robert.”

“Lass,” said the captain, “you need not tell me that.”

“And I would like to solace them.”

“Eppie, you had better try it. I have borne many a thing, but this I will not stand. I was willing to ware my life for the like of them, papists and heathens as they are, not six hours syne ; but I fear they had better have gone to the bottom after all !”

To Captain Robert’s utter amazement and discomfiture Eppie now began to cry. She had expected this turn, and led the way to it.

“I wonder at you, Captain Robert. You saved these poor souls, and you are a grand man, and they but beardless boys ; but you should not grudge them a woman’s pity.”

“Now, now, forgive me, Eppie, I would not hurt *you* ; but ah ! woman, you flung away on these

strangers of an hour what you never yielded neither to my service or to my prayers."

"It is not true," sobbed Eppie, passionately ; "though I laughed, I was vexed at your courtship. I tried to stop it to save you pain, and every now and then I was blaming myself hardly that I should cause you to suffer, until—only—until this morning."

"God forgive you, Eppie; what was there in a simple act of duty that could rob me of your scant esteem?"

"Oh! Captain Robert, dinna you see that from the moment I saw you performing your duty you had no need of my pity?"

He did not see it ; he had some thought that she was mocking him.

"Would you prefer my pity to my admiration?" Eppie demanded with great stateliness. But he had brought her to the verge of another word, and, having submitted herself to be humbled so far, she cried behind her kerchief more vehemently than ever.

Captain Robert was now indeed blessed ; his honest eyes *were opened* to the simple fact, and he

accepted it with the most profound gratitude. Ay, of course, he preferred the warm love pressed close to his bosom, to the pity which, like charity, is pale and cold, and hovers at a distance. It was sweet to the sailor that these familiar, rude waves had so unexpectedly struck the first peal of his wedding bells.

What remains to be told? Mistress Peggy was an authoritative mother to those silly, trauchled, hungry men, and though they could not interchange a word, they impressed her with their dignity, for she described Don Jan as “a buirdly man of a sedate walk and conversation.”

“Mr. James Melville, in spite of his downright declaration that there could be little friendship between them,” had frequent friendly intercourse with the commander, gifting him with the few bottles of rich wine, presented to him by his kinsman, Henry Scrymgeour.

In due time the party were honourably embarked and despatched to their master, who had made himself the laughing-stock of bluff Drake *and* Hawkins, with Europe at their back.

Captain Joshua in the "Lord Henry" had come into port the day after the landing of the Spaniards, and had immediately sailed again along with Captain Robert in the "Beacon," to hang as privateers on the skirts of the yet unmet Armada.

Naturally enough, Captain Robert completed his work smartly, and glided into Anstruther harbour with the boom of the last Antwerp gun, to claim his bride before the winter storms should strew the coast with wrecks. But Captain Joshua tarried in the chase of the defeated enemy, and Mistress Peggy was decided that the wedding which would make two pier heads gay should not be concluded without his august countenance.

This Captain Joshua, on whom the old lady laid such stress, was not so indispensable a personage to others. He was a little man, Mistress Peggy's junior in everything; quiet and subdued on shore, though proved a trusty guide on the inconstant element on which he had sailed so long, that it was almost as native to him as to the swift careering curlew or curtseying little wild duck. But he was the head of Mistress Peggy's family, the sole remnant of her generation, and

for full fifty years she had insisted on paying him deference.

There was something touching in the independent old lady's fidelity, and in the eagerness with which she bent the head and wore the coif to unexacting Captain Joshua, clinging to the vestige of her womanly allegiance, cased as she was in her armour of self-reliance, stubbornness, and sarcasm.

Captain Joshua did not return, though there were eager hearts awaiting him. Magnanimous Captain Robert grew urgent in his suit. No, Mistress Peggy was obdurate, the "Lord Henry" was safe, Captain Joshua had never seen the dungeons of the Inquisition, his merry men sang out nightly "all's well," and Anster had not succoured the benighted Spaniard in vain.

"Mistress Peggy," urged Captain Robert, "I maun sail with the spring winds, and I would fain wed my Eppie. You would not send a man abroad in his honeymoon. If we be parted as we stand, I'll not be less stout, I'll maybe grow grey ere I halt, and likelier lads may woo my lass *when my back is turned.*"

“Awa’ with you man, gin ye cannot depend upon her for ae voyage, how will ye trust her for twa lives?”

Mistress Peggy was white and restless as she overwhelmed her persecutors with reproaches; but she would not be overborne by their longings or by their terrors, and so the bridegroom tarried for his bride, until on one white, watery November dawn the “Lord Henry” rode within hail, and the boat from its side had Captain Joshua in the stern, and Roger Swanson was rowing the first oar, that he might the sooner present his child to the Lord, and, at the same time, slip into the long-handled wooden ladle his thanksofferings from his prize-money. And young Eppie Melville, in the flush of her strength and delicate bloom, was selected to carry the babe in his caul and mantle all the way up the church aisle, blushing and bridling in a bewitching maidenly fashion, all because she was a sailor’s neice, and about to become a sailor’s wife.

But where had the loiterers lingered? They had brought home a rare experience. They had *followed in the wake of the ruins of the Armada,*

and, following too far, had floundered into the circle of six galleons, and been captured and towed under the white walls of Cadiz. There they had heard the salute of cries of vengeance and oaths of retribution, till the stalwart figure of Don Jan Gomez rose upon their glad sight, and forced a passage to their side. Don Jan was not ashamed to own them, he entertained them like a frank sailor, he pleaded and prayed for them, and so they were out of the gloomy grip of Philip. They were with casks of purple raisins, and barrels of snow-white flour, and boxes of oranges and figs, and American sugar, and runlets of wine, and Don Jan and his captains had inquired "for the Laird of Anstruther and the minister," and every good man of the Anster towns.

Mistress Peggy was a happy woman, and proud beyond easy bearing, till Captain Joshua was sly enough to whisper a private message from her strange friend. Then, indeed, she started up, her stately face in a flame, and working with half angry, half confused laughter. "The presumptuous peat! the light-headed auld fule! to *mint sic* madness. To even an East Neuk

woman of douce years to be Donna to a philandering, doited Don ; he had better speer my hand in the dance next. A hantle more fitting he were ordering his burial, like his King Charles. And though he had been in his prime, like Captain Robert, and I had been youthful and glaiket, like that weathercock Eppie, would a woman of the Covenant have cast an ee on a besotted son of the Pope of Rome ? It is an idle jest, Captain Joshua, and it sets you no that weel to repeat it."

James Melville fell into some blunders and many tribulations in his career. But it is not at all probable that he ever regretted his brief intercourse with Don Jan and his crew any more than his other gentle largesses. Significantly enough, this talent of giving is the trait by which he is best remembered in his old place. He who had received so thrifty an example from the representative of the Stewarts, that he declared of the short period of his court sojourn, "as for gifts from the court, I sought none, and I got none unsought," showed a different practice in the rights of fishing, which he bought from the Laird of Anstruther and presented to the Kirk ; the manse

which he built, and with which he endowed the parish; the school which he upheld by his heavily taxed means; as well as in the golden angels which he sent to Mr. Andrew in the tower, with the royal sentence, "I shall send you money, and you shall send me songs."

II.

OLD GATHERINGS.

THE OLD YEOMANRY WEEKS.

I.—THE YEOMEN'S ADVENT.—PRIORTON SPRUCES ITSELF UP.



TIME changes both defences and amusements. Now we have volunteer reviews in place of old yeomanry weeks. But it is worth while looking back on what was so hearty, quaint, humorous, and stirring in times bygone.

Beasts as well as men had their day in the past. The tramp of horses, their brisk neigh, and the flourish of their long tails added to the general attraction. The coats of the Yeomen, too, were of the most sanguinary red. And there were other charms. The calling out of the troop for ten days involved a muster from all the

county for twelve or fifteen miles round. There was thus an inroad of country friends. The genial system of billeting was in vogue, too, so that every bed was full. And allies and satellites called in, in happy succession, to share the bustle and glee. A company of respectable theatrical stars, patronised both by officers and privates, visited the town; and a wonderfully brilliant yeomanry ball, attended alike by gentle and simple, wound up the successful interlude in ordinary life.

The little town of Priorton spruced itself up for its yeomanry weeks, and was all agog, as it never was at any other time. The campaign commenced by the arrival on horseback of a host of country gentlemen and farmers, in plain clothes as yet. But they carried at their saddle-bows, packages containing their cherished ensigns and symbols—in their case the very glory of the affair. Along with these in many cases came judicious presents of poultry and game.

There were such hand-shakings in the usually quiet streets, such groomings of horses at stables behind old-fashioned little taverns, such pipe-claying of belts and polishing of helmets, and,

above all, such joyous anticipatory parties in private houses !

The season was always the height of the summer, not perhaps in every respect the best for such a muster. Stout Yeomen had even been known to faint while at drill ; the combined influences of the fatigue, the heat, and last night's hilarity, being too much for them. But farmers and farming lairds could not well quit their lands unless in the beginning of July, when the June hoeing of turnips and beans had been got through, the first grass cut, and while there was still a good three weeks before barley-harvest. Trees were then dusky in their green, and gooseberries and currants tinted the Priorton gardens with rich amber and crimson. Roses redder than the yeomen's coats were in full flower for every waistcoat and waistband. The streets and roads were dusty, under blue skies or black thunder-clouds ; but the meadows were comparatively cool and fresh, and now white with the summer snow of daisies. The bustle of the Yeomen, like the trillings of wandering musicians, was heard only *in the brooding heat of summer afternoons,*

or the rosy flush of summer sunset, the prime of the year lending a crowning charm to their advent.

It was a delightful start, that first *réveillée* of the bugle at five of the clock on a July morning. Youngsters whom nought else could have tempted out of bed so early darted up at the summons. They envied papas and uncles, brothers and cousins in the ranks of the Yeomen. Comely blooming young faces joined the watch at the windows. Cloaks were loosely cast about rounded shoulders, and caps were hastily snatched up to hide dishevelled hair ; while little bare pink feet would sometimes show themselves. But the young ladies only peeped out behind the window curtains, in the background of the noisy demonstrative band of youngsters.

Distant voices, excited and impatient, were soon heard ; then the jingle of spurs, and the clank of swords, as half-bashful Yeomen descended the stairs for their *début* in the street. At last appeared important familiar persons, now strikingly transformed by their martial dress, but terribly uncomfortable and self-conscious.

The horses were led to the doors; and to the women who stayed at home the mounts were the exquisitely comic incidents of the day. The return of the members of the troop, now broken to their work, and detached into groups of threes and fours, and chatting and laughing at their ease, was quite tame in comparison. The country gentlemen and farmers were, of course, generally well used to the saddle and could get upon their Bucephaluses without difficulty, and ride cavalierly, or prick briskly out of sight, as they were in good time or too late. But here and there a solicitor or banker, or wealthy shopkeeper, ambitious of being among the Yeomen, would meet with unhappy enough adventures. He might be seen issuing from his doorway with pretended unconcern, but with anxious clearings of the throat and ominously long breaths, while his nag, strange to him as John Gilpin's, was brought up to the mounting-place. The worthy man would plant his foot in the stirrup next him, but, not throwing himself round decidedly enough, the horse would swerve and rear, while he looked on beseechingly and helpless. Then he would try the other side

still failing to swing himself into the saddle. He would grow more and more flustered. His wife, in her clean muslin cap and spotless calico wrapper, with her little lads and lasses—one, two, three—would then step out on the pavement to give cautious advice. The would-be Yeoman would become more and more nervous, while his comrades rode by with jeering glances, and the passengers stood still. Little boys would begin to whoop and hurrah; and a crowd, even at this early hour, would gather round to enjoy the experiment. “Hey, Nancy! get me a kitchen chair,” the town-bred Yeoman at last would say in desperation to his elderly commiserating maid-servant in the distance; and from that steady half-way stand he would climb into the saddle with a groan, settle himself sack fashion; and, working the bridle laboriously with his arms, trot off, to return very saddle sick.

Then some stubborn young fellow, possessed with the notion of showing off a dashing horse, would insist on riding a vicious, almost dangerous animal, which would on no account endure the sight of his *flaming regimentals* on the occasions of his mount-

ings and dismountings. Once in the saddle, he would master it thoroughly, and pay it back in kind with whip and spur, compelling the furious beast to face a whole line of red coats, and wheel, march, charge, and halt with perfect correctness. But the horse would have its moment of revenge as its rider leapt to and from the saddle. If it encountered the scarlet and the glitter of brass and steel, at that instant it would get quite wild, paw the air, fling out its hoofs, snort and dash off wildly, to the danger of its own and its master's life. But the young soldier would not be beat. Day after day the contest would be renewed. At length he would resort to a compromise, and his groom would bring out the animal with its head ignominiously muffled in a sack; and now the Yeoman would mount with comparative safety.

But the bugle is sounding to drill in the early summer morning. Tra-li-la! the clear music suits with the songs of the birds and the dew on the grass. The last lagging Yeoman is off, gone to receive a public reprimand from his strict commanding officer, but sure to have the affront rubbed out next morning by a similar

fault, and a similar experience, on the part of *a* comrade.

The drill ends at the common breakfast hour, when the Yeoman may be supposed to return and feast sumptuously. Then "civil" work begins. Yeomen who had offices or shops, attended them with slight relics of their uniform. A stranger might have been pardoned had he imagined an invasion was daily expected, or that an intestine war was on the point of breaking out. In consideration of the hot weather, undress uniform was permitted on all save field days ; and thus the toiling Yeomen enjoyed a little cool in their white ducks and jackets, though the red mark, the helmet's line, was still to be traced on their sun-browned foreheads.

There was an afternoon's drill. It was a little of a fag, being in fact rather like a dish heated up a second time, as a duty twice done mostly always is. But the evening was particularly gay. Then the Yeomen were supposed to be enjoying themselves. Pleasant, if they had always enjoyed themselves in an innocent fashion. That many of them did so, it *is only* charitable to believe. And while the fast

and foolish, the gross and wicked were swilling and roystering in evil localities, the generous, manly, gentle souls gratified the matrons with whom they were billeted by walking with them and their daughters through the streets, or into the nearest meadow ; or perhaps they treated them to the play.

I have only heard of those days. But I should have liked to have seen the bluff kind faces above the stiff stocks and scarlet coats, and the joyous smiles which shone upon them. I should have liked to have heard the quiet town ringing with such blithe laughter. Little jokes would cause the people to laugh, as little accidents would cause them to shake their heads. Sandy Hope's horse, for instance, lost a shoe while at the gallop, stumbled, and threw its rider, dislocating his shoulder, and breaking his arm. What a sensation the news created ! It could scarcely have been greater even though Sandy's brains had been dashed out. Not only Sandy himself but Sandy's kindred to the remotest degree, were deeply commiserated. The commanding officer sent his compliments every morning with inquiries after him. The troop doctor *was besieged by anxious acquaintances.* Sandy's

comrades never ceased calling upon him, and sat for hours drinking beer at his open window. Delicious messes and refreshing drinks a thousand times better than beer, were sent to Sandy. Then the nosegays, the books he got! Sandy received a perfect ovation. It was even proposed that the ball should be put off because Sandy was lying in pain; and it was certain that no fewer than three reputed sweethearts of Sandy's stayed at home on the ball night. Yet the stupid fellow was so slightly hurt, that within the fortnight he was walking the streets of Priorton more briskly than ever!

Priorton was kindly in its gaiety, and each had an interest in the other. I should have liked to have known the old town when it was thus given up for ten days, half to military exercises, half to fraternity and feasting. I should have been sorry when the feasting was intemperate, but I would no more have condemned the general feasting because of that circumstance, than I would condemn the gift of speech because some of us are so left to ourselves as to tell lies or say bad words.

II.—A MATCH-MAKER'S SCHEME.

It was a well-known and accredited fact that in consequence of these festivities of the Yeomen more marriages were made up in this brief interval than during any other period of the year. Match-making individuals seriously counted on the yeomanry weeks ; and probably far-seeing young ladies had fitting matches in their eye, as well as the fireworks and the introductory gaiety, when they came in troops to Priorton to entertain the lucky Yeomen.

“My dear,” said Mrs. Spottiswoode, the wife of the chief magistrate, who was likewise banker of Priorton, to her spouse, “your cousin, Bourhope, has asked his billet with us : I must have my sister Corrie in to meet him.”

Mrs. Spottiswoode was a showy, smart, good-humoured woman, but not over scrupulous. She was very ready at adapting herself to circumstances, even when the circumstances were against her. For that reason she was considered very clever as well as very affable, among the matrons of Priorton. Mr. Spottiswoode was “slow and sure :” it was because of the *happy alliance* of these qualities in him

that the people of Priorton had elected him chief magistrate.

“My dear,” deliberately observed long, lanky Mr. Spottiswoode, “would it not be rather bare-faced to have Bourhope and Corrie here together?”

“Oh, I’ll take care of that,” answered the lady, with a laugh and a toss of her ribands; “I shall have some other girl of my acquaintance to bear Corrie company;—some worthy, out-of-the-way girl, to whom the visit will be like entering another world,” continued Mrs. Spottiswoode, with a twinkle of her black eyes. “What do you think of Corrie and my cousin Chrissy Hunter, of Blackfaulds? The Hunters have had such a deal of distress, and so much fighting with embarrassment—though I believe they are getting clearer now—that the poor lassie has had no amusement but her books, and has seen absolutely nothing.”

Mr. Spottiswoode had no inclination to contradict his wife for contradiction’s sake, and as he could rely on her prudence as on her other good qualities, he said, “Well, Agnes, I have no objection; Hunter of Blackfaulds is an honest man though he is poor, and he is righting himself now.”

The invitations were despatched, and accepted gratefully. The guests arrived before Bourhope occupied his quarters; ostensibly they came so soon to prepare for him. Corrie had nothing Roman about her except her name, Cornelia. She was a tall, well-made, fair-faced, serene beauty; the sole remaining maiden daughter of a Scotchman who had returned from the Indies with a fortune, as so many returned then. He had already endowed Mrs. Spottiswoode with a handsome "tocher," and since his marriage had settled within five miles of Priorton. Chrissy, again, was one of a large, struggling family; a small girl, a very little crooked in figure, and with irregular features, and a brown complexion. If she had not possessed a bright, intelligent expression, she would certainly have been plain—as indeed she was to those who did not heed expression. It was a delightful chance to Chrissy, this brief transplanting into the flourishing, cheerful town-house, amid the glowing gaiety of the yeomanry weeks. Accordingly she was constantly engaged in checking off every little detail on the finger-points of her active mind, in order that she might be able to describe them to her

secluded sisters and her sick mother at home. She was determined not to miss one item of interest, never to sleep-in so as to lose the mount; never to stray in her walks and fail to be in the house at the return from the afternoon drill. She would pace the meadows among the gay promenaders even when the evening was cloudy, and would not care though she walked alone. She would enjoy the play when Mrs. Spottiswoode chose to take her, and not even object to a squeeze in the box. The squeeze was really part of the fun! she did not care to have her attention distracted from the stage, even by the proffers of fruit from the Yeomen. As to the ball, she did not allow herself to think much of that. Who would ever have dreamt of Chrissy figuring at a fine young man's ball! She would not trouble herself because she wore an old worked white frock of her mother's taken up by tucks to suit her, and yellowed by frequent washing and long keeping. She would not fret because she could not spend money upon a hair-dresser. She must dress her own head—which was scanty, like every other outward adornment of hers. This was little matter,

reflected, for it would not dress under the most skilful artist into those enormous bows on the crown of the head which everybody then wore—it would only go into comb-curls like little hair turrets on each side of her round, full forehead, which was by no means scanty. She had no ornaments in the way of jewellery, save a coral necklace; while Corrie had a set of amethysts—real amethysts—ear-rings, brooch, and necklace, and a gold cross and a gold watch, which she rarely wound up, and which was therefore, as Chrissy said, “a dead-alive affair.” But Corrie was a beauty and an heiress, and ornaments became her person and position; while on Chrissy, as she herself admitted with great good sense, they would only have been thrown away. And what did Chrissy care for her appearance so long as her dress was modest and neat? She could walk about and listen to the ravishing music, and study the characters she saw, from Corrie up to the Countess, wife of the one earl who came to Priorton, and who was Colonel of the yeomanry. The day or two before the Yeomanry arrived was spent by the two girls in walking about, shopping and making calls. Corrie, though a

beauty, proved herself a very dull companion for another girl to walk with. Very pretty to look at was Corrie in a fair, still, swan-like style of beauty ; and she had a great many pretty dresses, over which she became a little more animated when Chrissy, as a last resource and for their relief, would ask her to turn them over and show them again. Corrie, of course, never dreamt of offering poor Chrissy a loan of any of those worked pelerines or aprons, which would have fitted either equally well. But Chrissy did not want them, and she got a use out of them as they were brought out one by one and spread before her. Ere the yeomanry came, Chrissy knew the stock by heart, and could have drawn them, and cut out patterns and shapes of them, and probably did so, the little jade, when she got home.

Bourhope came with his fellows, and was more specially introduced to Corrie and Chrissy. He had had some general acquaintance with both of them before. He gallantly expressed his pleasure at the prospect of having their society during his stay at Priorton. He was a farmer whose father had made money at war prices. He had bought *his own farm*, and thus constituted his son a small

laird. He had an independent bearing, as well as an independent portion of the world's goods ; he was really a manly fellow in his brown, ruddy, curly, strapping comeliness. But better still, Bourhope was an intelligent fellow, who read other things than the newspapers, and relished them. He was a little conceited, no doubt, in consequence of comparing himself with others, but he had a good heart. Corrie and Chrissy both regarded him with scarcely concealed interest and admiration. Chrissy wished that the lads at home would grow up to be as comely and manly ; Corrie made up her mind to have just such a husband as Bourhope.

It was evident the very first night that Bourhope was taken with Corrie. He stared and stared at her, admiring her waxen complexion, the bend of her white throat, and the slope of her white shoulders ; and even changed his seat at one time, as it seemed, in order to see her better. He quickly claimed her as his partner at loo, and engaged her to walk out with him to hear the band practising next evening. Chrissy thought it all very natural, and all the more enjoyable. But she caught herself fancying

Bourhope and Corrie married, and rebuked herself for carrying her speculations so far. Only she could not help thinking how Bourhope would weary after the marriage—say when there was a snow-storm, or a three days' fall of rain at the farm-house. But that was Bourhope's affair ; if he was pleased, what business was it of hers ? Bourhope had this in common with Chrissy—he could entertain himself.

During the first three days of the week, Bourhope was zealous in looking at and attaching himself to Corrie. But a sharp observer might have remarked that after that he flagged a little, taking more as a matter of course and politeness the association he had established between her and him at tea, loo, and the evening promenade. He would even stifle a yawn while in Corrie's company, though he was a mettlesome and not a listless fellow. But that was only like men, to prize less what they had coveted when it was half won.

So for a short time matters stood. Corrie, fair and swan-like, Bourhope reasonably impressionable, Mr. and Mrs. Spottiswoode decidedly favourable, *Chrissy Hunter* harmless, if not even helpful. Mrs.

Spottiswoode knew that those who dally with a suggestion are in great danger of acting on it, and had very little doubt that the next ten days' work, with the crowning performance of the ball, would issue in deciding the desirable match between Bourhope and Corrie.

III.—A MORNING MEETING AND AN EVENING'S READING.

At this juncture it struck Bourhope, riding home from the morning drill, to ask himself what could possibly take Chrissy Hunter out so early every morning. He had already seen her once or twice, keeping out of the way of him and his companions, and returning again from the opposite end of Priorton, which was flanked by the doctor's house. Corrie, he noticed, was never with her. Indeed, Bourhope had a strong suspicion that Corrie retreated to her pillow again after showing him her lovely face—lovely even in the pink curl-papers. But Chrissy certainly dressed immediately, and took a morning walk, by which her complexion at least did not profit. Not being a very strong *little woman*, her brown face was apt to look jaded

and streaky, when Bourhope, resting from the fatigues of his drill, lounged with the girls in the early forenoon in Mrs. Spottiswoode's drawing-room. So it was worth while he thought, to spur up to Chrissy and inquire what took her abroad at such an untimely hour.

When Bourhope caught a nearer glimpse of Chrissy he was rather dismayed to see that she had been crying. Bourhope hated to see girls crying, particularly girls like Chrissy, to whom it was not becoming. He had no particular fancy for Cinderellas or other beggar-maids. He would have hated to find that his kinsfolk and friendly host and hostess, for whom he had a considerable regard, were mean enough and base enough to maltreat a poor little guest of their own invitation. Notwithstanding these demurs, Tom Spottiswoode of Bourhope rode so fast up to Chrissy as to cause her to give a violent start when she turned.

"Hallo! Do you go to market, Miss Chrissy? or what on earth takes you out in the town before the shutters are down?" pointing with his sheathed sword to a closed shop.

Chrissy was taken aback, and there was some-

thing slightly hysterical in her laugh, but she answered frankly enough, "I go to Doctor Stark's; Mr. Spottiswoode. Dr. Stark attends my mother, and is at Blackfaulds every day. I wait in his laboratory till he comes there before setting out; he goes his rounds early, you know. He lets me know how mother was yesterday, and as he is a kind man, he carries our letters,—Maggie and Arabella and I are great writers, and postage comes to be expensive—a great deal too expensive for us at Blackfaulds; but the doctor is a kind man, and he 'favours' our letters. And Mr. Spottiswoode," she said, warming with her subject and impelled to a bit of confidence, "do you know, Dr. Stark thinks my mother will be about again in a few months. You are aware her knee-joint has been affected. We were even afraid she would never put down her foot again. It would have been a dreadful trial for all of us." Chrissy spoke simply, in a rather moved voice.

Bourhope was slightly moved, too. He had never heard much about Mrs. Hunter, of Blackfaulds, except that she was a woman who had been long *ailing*; and also occasional remarks

about the consequences of her being lost or spared to her family.

Chrissy was grateful for his evident sympathy and gratified by it; but, as if half ashamed of having elicited it, she at once began to prattle to him on other subjects. Bourhope had leapt from his horse, and was doing Chrissy the honour of walking at her side, his beast's bridle over his arm, and his spurs ringing on the pavement. A sparkling prattle that was of Chrissy's about the fine morning, the town, and the yeomanry,—few topics, but well handled and brilliantly illustrated. Bourhope had dared to confess to himself how sorry he was when he reached Mr. Spottiswoode's door.

Next morning Bourhope detached himself from his comrades when he approached the town, and looked narrowly for Chrissy. It would be but civil to inquire for poor Mrs. Hunter. So bent was he on being thus civil, that though Chrissy was far in advance, he knew her by the pink gingham trimming of her morning bonnet, fluttering like rose-leaves in the morning sun. He came up to her, and politely asked after her mother. Chrissy was a little confused, but she

answered pleasantly enough. She was not nearly so talkative, however, as on the preceding morning, though Bourhope made witty comments on the letter she held in her hand, and pertinaciously insisted on her telling him whether she mentioned him in her return letters! He reminded her that they were cousins in a way. This was the first time Chrissy had known of any one hunting up a relationship with her; and though pleased in her humility—Chrissy was no fool in that humility of her's—Bourhope, she knew, was destined for her cousin Corrie. He was out of Corrie's way just now, and was only courteous and cordial to her as living for a time under the same roof. She liked the ruddy, curly, independent, clever fellow of a farmer laird, who, out of the riches of his kindness, could be courteous and cordial to a poor plain girl. Bourhope could never overtake Chrissy coming from Dr. Stark's again. He spied and peeped and threw out hints, and hurried or loitered on the way to no purpose. Chrissy took care that people should not notice the fact of her being escorted home in the early morning by Bourhope.

A chance conversation between Mrs. Spottiswoode and Corrie was overheard one day by Bourhope, when they imagined him deep in "Blackwood;" for it was the days of the "Noctes." Mr. Hunter, of Redcraigs, Corrie's father, had not been well one day, and a message had been sent to that effect to her. But Corrie was philosophic, and not unduly alarmed. "Papa makes such a work about himself," she said candidly to Mrs. Spottiswoode. "Very likely he has only taken lobster at supper, or his Jamaica rum has not agreed with him, and he is bilious this morning. I think I will send out a box of colocynth, and a bit of nice tender veal, to put him in good humour again. You know, Agnes, if I were to drive out, I would not get back in time for the evening walk in the meadows. Besides, I was to see Miss Aikin about the change in the running on of my frills. It would overturn all my plans to go; and my head gets so hot and I look so blowsy, when my plans are disarranged," Corrie concluded, almost piteously.

"Yes, but Corrie," hesitated Mrs. Spottiswoode, "you know Dr. Stark is not easy about papa just *now*. I think I had better go out myself. It is

unlucky that Spottiswoode is to have several other yeomen who do business at the Bank, at dinner to-day with Bourhope ; but I dare say Mary will manage that, as Chrissy will mix the pudding for her. So I will go myself to Redcraigs ; all things considered, it would be a pity for you not to be in your best looks——”

Bourhope at this point fell into a fit of coughing, and lost the rest of the dialogue ; but perhaps his occasional snort of disapprobation was called forth as much by this interlude as by the audacious judgments of the Shepherd and Tickler.

The day unluckily turned out very rainy, and the drill was gone through in a dense white mist, which caused every horse to loom large as an elephant, and every rider to look a Gog or Magog. The young ladies, so fond of a change of costume at this time in Priorton, could do no shopping ; the walk in the meadows at sunset with the lounging yeomen had to be given up. The green meadows were not inviting, the grass was dripping, the flowers closed and heavy, the river red and drumly. All was disappointing ; for the meadows were beautiful at this season *with their* summer snow of daisies—not

dead - white snow either, for it was broken by patches of yellow buttercups, crow's foot, lady's finger, and vetch, and by the crimson clover flowers and the rusty red of sorrel, and the black pert heads of the nib-wort plaintain, whose black upon the white of ox-eye daisies has the rich tone of ermine.

Instead of walks, there were gatherings round shining tables ; and bottles and glasses clinked cheerily in many a parlour. But Mr. Spottiswoode was sober by inclination. The impressiveness of office, which had quite the contrary effect on many provosts of his era, only added to his characteristic caution. The yeomen, too, knew well where hilarity ended and excess began. So there was little fear of excess in Mr. Spottiswoode's house. Mrs. Spottiswoode, a genius in her own line, had a cheerful fire in her drawing-room, and sat by the hearth with her children tumbling round her, while Corrie, fairer than ever in the blinking fire-light, and Chrissy, brown and merry, sat on either side of her. She invited the farmer laird to enter that charmed ring, which, of course, he could not help contrasting with the loneliness and comfortlessness of Bourhope. But though Bourhope sat

next Corrie, a certain coldness crept over the well-arranged party. He caught himself glancing curiously at the book Chrissy Hunter had been almost burning her face in reading by the fire-light before he came in. Mrs. Spottiswoode did not much care for reading aloud, but she took the hint in good part, and called on Chrissy to tell what her book was about, and so divert Bourhope without wholly monopolizing his attention.

Chrissy was rather shy at first. She never told stories freely away from home ; but she was now pressed to do it. After a little, however, she put her own sympathetic humour and pathos into the wondrous narrative, till she literally held her listeners spell-bound. And no wonder. Those were the days of Scott's early novels, when they were greatly run after, and the price of a night's reading was high. Chrissy's cousin "Rob" was a bookseller's apprentice, and his master, for the purpose of enabling Robbie to share his enthusiasm, would lend the apprentice an uncut copy. Robbie brought it out to Blackfaulds, and then all would sit up, sick mother among the rest, to hear them read aloud, till far into the small hours.

Who can tell what that cordial of pure, healthful intellectual diversion may have been, even to the burdened father and sick mother at Blackfaulds! To Chrissy—the very speaking of it made her clasp her hands over her knee, and her gray eyes to shine out like stars—as Bourhope thought to himself.

How suggestively Chrissy discoursed of Glendearg, and the widow Elspeth Glendinning, her two lads, and Martin and Tib Tacket, and the gentle lady and Mary Avenel. With what breadth, yet precision, she reproduced pursy Abbot Boniface, devoted Prior Eustace, wild Christie of the Clint-hill, buxom Mysie Hopper, exquisite Sir Percy Shafton, and even tried her hand to some purpose on the ethereal White Lady. Perhaps Chrissy enjoyed the reading as much as the great enchanter did the writing. Like great actors, she had an instinctive consciousness of the effect she produced. Bourhope shouted with laughter when the incorrigible Sir Percy, in the disguise of the dairywoman, described his routing charge as “the milky mothers of the herd.” Corrie *actually* glanced in affright at the steaming

windows and the door ajar, and pinched Chrissy's arm when she repeated for the last time the words of the spell :—

“Thrice to the holly brake—
Thrice to the well;—
Wake thee, O wake,
White Maid of Avenel.”

The assembly paid Chrissy the highest compliment an assembly can pay a speaker. They forgot their schemes, their anxieties, themselves even, to fasten their eyes and hearts on the brown girl—the book dropping from her hand, but the story written so graphically on her memory. Corrie was the first to recover herself. “Oh dear!” she cried, “I have forgot I was to take down my hair for Miss Lothian to point it at eight o'clock,” and hurried out of the room.

Mrs. Spottiswoode roused herself next, and spoke a few words of acknowledgment to Chrissy. “Upon my word, Chrissy, your recital has been quite as good as the play. We are much obliged to you. I am afraid your throat must be sore; but stay, I have some of the theatre oranges here. No, bairns, you are *not to have any*; it is far too late for you

to be up. Dear me ; I believe you have been listening to Chrissy's story like the rest of us !" But Mrs. Spottiswoode was not under any apprehension about the success of Chrissy's reading. Mrs. Spottiswoode proved this by immediately leaving Chrissy *tête-à-tête* with Bourhope while she went to put the children to bed, and see if Mr. Spottiswoode, who was doing a quiet turn of business in his office, would have a game of cards before supper. She had really never heard of a girl being married simply for her tongue's sake ! She perhaps knew the line in the song too—

" Very few marry for talking,"

and had found its truth in her own experience, for she was a shrewd, observant woman.

Bourhope, it should be understood, was longest subjected to the influence of Chrissy's story-telling power. Indeed, when he did somewhat recover from it, his fancy created fine visions of what it would be to have such a storyteller at Bourhope during the long, dark nights of winter and the endless days of summer. Bourhope was no *ignoramus*. He had some acquaintance with " Winter's

Tales" and summer pastorals, but his reading was bald and tame to this inspiration. He thought to himself it would really be as good as a company of players purely for his own behoof, without any of the disadvantages. He stammered a little in expressing the debt he owed to Chrissy, and she could only eagerly reply by saying, "Not to me, not to me the praise, Mr. Spottiswoode, but to the great unknown. Oh! I would like to know him."

Bourhope was stimulated to do at once what he was sure to do ultimately: he presented his hospitable entertainers with a box at the play. No doubt it was a great delight to Chrissy; for it was in the days when actors were respectable artists and play-going was still universal. Chrissy in her freshness enjoyed the provincials as well as if they had been first-rate—took the good and left the bad, and sat quite entranced.

Bourhope, although he was decidedly intellectual for his calling, watched Chrissy rather than the stage. He read the feeling of the moment reflected in her sagacious yet sensitive face. Once he turned *round* and tried the same experiment

with Corrie. He might as well have expected to borrow a living soul from well-moulded stucco or marble. He now realised in a more lively manner than ever, that geese may look fair and white and soft and shapely as swans till they expose their waddling. He tried in church the process he had learned at the play, and, it must be confessed, not without effect—Chrissy's expression giving a fair notion of the good Priorton minister's earnestness and eloquence.

But at length Chrissy, aware of the liberty Bourhope took in thus making her his study, got restless and troubled in her sound head and warm heart. She was no fool in her simplicity. She knew that Bourhope did not in any sense belong to Mrs. Spottiswoode and Corrie, and she had shrewdly suspected of late that their anticipated arrangements would not be carried out. She could not help occasionally turning over in her mind the circumstance that Cecilia was very plain, but that depressed Mortimer Delville nevertheless bestowed his heart on her, though the gift, like her fortune, was disastrous to Cecilia for many a long day. *Chrissy* thought that if Bourhope were indepen-

dent and original enough to like her—to love her—he was his own master ; there was nothing between him and his inclination save her inclination and her father and mother's will. And there was little doubt about father and mother's will with respect to a man so worthy, so unexceptionable, and so well endowed as Bourhope.

Nor was there anything like duty to the Spottiswoodes to stand between Bourhope and Chrissy. But still Chrissy's nice sense of honour was disturbed, for had she not a guess that a very different result had been expected? Nay, she had even a half comical notion that she herself had been expressly selected as a companion to Corrie Hunter during the gaieties of the yeomanry weeks, because she would also prove a sort of harmless foil.

A dream of love was a grand shock to Chrissy's quiet life, making wild yet plaintive music, like all nature's true harmonies, within her, and filling her mind with tremulous light which glorified every object, and was fain even to dazzle herself. It was not unnatural that Bourhope should excite such a dream. But Chrissy was not completely dazzled. It was *only a dream* as yet, and she would be the

mistress of her dream ; it should not be the mistress of her. So she resolved, showing herself a reasonable, thoughtful, conscientious woman, as well as a loving, fairly proportioned and lovely human spirit.

Chrissy retained all her sober senses. She recollected what was due both to the hero and to the others concerned. She was neither a weak victim, nor a headstrong, arrogant, malicious conqueror. Like all genuine women, she struggled against yielding herself without her due—without a certainty that there was no irreversible mistake in the matter. She was not a girl to get love-sick at the first bout, nor one to run even at a worthy lover's beckoning, though she would sacrifice much, and do it proudly, joyously, for true affection, when once it had confessed itself. So she shrank from Bourhope, slipped away from, and managed to avoid him. He was puzzled and vexed, and almost exasperated by doubts as to whether she cared for or wished to accept his notice and regards. Little brown Chrissy taught the bold Yeoman a lesson in her own quiet way. She slowly forced upon him the conviction that any

gifts or attainments of his—the prosperous, cultivated farmer laird—were as dross compared with the genius and acquirements of Chrissy Hunter, whom many short-sighted men called insignificant and plain amid the poverty and cares of Blackfaulds. Bourhope was not radically mercenary : he had no certainty that his superiority in worldly estate would secure the strange good upon which he set his heart, and he was at once stimulated and incensed by her indifference to his advances. So he had no communication with Chrissy, apart from a demure interchange of words in general conversation, for three days before the grand review and the ball, except in a single incident of the pipe-claying of his belts.

The gentlemen of the old yeomanry who had not servants to do it for them, did their own pipe-claying, and might generally be seen doing it very indifferently to the accompaniment of private whistling or social bawling to each other over adjacent walls in the back courts and greens of Priorton. Bourhope was one day doing his rather gloomily in the back court, and succeeding very ill, when Chrissy, who saw him from a window,

could endure it no longer. Chrissy was not what most intellectual women are described as being—an abstracted, scared being, with two left hands. The exigency of her situation as eldest daughter at Blackfaulds had rendered her as handy as other girls, and only unlike them in being a great deal more fertile in resource. How could such a woman stand and see Bourhope destroying his accoutrements, and in danger of smearing himself from head to foot with pipe-clay? Chrissy came tripping out, and addressed him with some sharpness:—“That is not right, Mr. Spottiswoode; you will never whiten your belt in that way, you will only soil the rest of your clothes. I watched the old sergeant doing it next door for Major Christison. Look here:” and she took the article out of his hands and proceeded smartly to clean it. Poor Bourhope bowed to her empire, though he would much rather their positions had been reversed;—he would rather a thousand times have brushed Chrissy’s shoes than that she should clean his belts. She was gone again the moment she had directed him. A portion of his belt was now as white as *snow*; but nothing would have induced her to stay.

Bourhope was new to the humiliations as well as the triumphs of love—that extreme ordeal through which even tolerably wise and sincere spirits must pass before they can unite in a strictness of union deserving the name. He was not exactly grateful for the good suggestion ; indeed, he had a little fight against Chrissy in his own breast just then. He told himself it was all a whim, he did not really care for the girl—one of a large family in embarrassed circumstances. No, it would be absurd to fall in love with a little coffee-coloured girl whose one shoulder was a fraction of an inch farther out than the other. He was not compelled to marry either Corrie or Chrissy—not he! Pooh!—he was not yet half through with his bachelor days. He would look about a little longer, enjoy himself a little more. At the word enjoyment Bourhope stopped short, as if he had caught himself tripping. If Chrissy Hunter was ugly, she was an ugly fairy. She was his fate, indeed; he would never see her like again, and he would be a lost and wrecked man without her.

IV.—THE BALL, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

The review and the ball were still in store. Bourhope would not be beaten with that double shot in reserve. It would go hard with the brown, curly, independent laird if he were beaten, for already he was shaken more in his pride and confidence than he ever thought to be.

The review, for which all the drilling had been undertaken, went off without serious effect on the contesting parties. The only thing was, that Bourhope was so disturbed and so distracted in his mind, that he could not attend to orders, and lost his character as a yeoman, and all chance of being future fogleman to his corps. And this, although the Major had said, when the drills began, that there was not a finer man or a more promising dragoon than Bourhope in the regiment.

Chrissy's bright, tranquil satisfaction in contemplating, from the box of Mrs. Spottiswoode's phæton, the stand of county ladies, with their gorgeousness and grace, was decidedly impaired. The review, with its tramping and halting, its squares *and files*, its shouting leaders, galloping aides-de-

camp, flashing swords and waving plumes, was certainly very fine. All the rest of Priorton said so and proved so, for they stood or sat for a whole day witnessing it, under a scorching sun, on foot and in every description of vehicle from a corn-cart to a coronetted carriage. Yes, the review was very fine to the mass; but it was only a confused, hollow, agitating play to Chrissy as to Bourhope. Still she lost sight of the grand general rank and file, by concentrating her regard on one little scarlet dot. It was to her a play with its heart awanting, and yet the whirl and movement were welcome for a moment as substitutes for that heart.

The ball remained, and Bourhope was resolute it should settle the question for him. It was the commendable fashion at Priorton that no young lady should refuse to dance with an acquaintance without the excuse of a previous engagement, under the penalty of having to sit the rest of the night. Bourhope would get Chrissy to himself that night (balls were of some use, after all, he thought) and have an opportunity of hearing a terribly decisive word, and of getting a reason for that word too, should it prove unfavourable. In short he would

storm the fortress, and beat down its faltering guard then or never.

Others besides Bourhope had determined on making the ball a theatre of explanations. Mrs. Spottiswoode was not pleased with the aspect of things as between Bourhope and Corrie. Their affair made no advance, and the ball was the conclusion of the yeomanry weeks. The yeomen were already, to all intents and purposes disbanded, and about to return, like Cincinnatus, to their reaping-hooks. Corrie was evidently not contented. She was listless and a little peevish, unless when in the company of other yeomen than Bourhope—a rare thing with Corrie, who was really a very harmless girl. But she looked elegant in her ball dress, and had always a train of admirers on such occasions. And then of course, many men needed the spur of jealousy to induce them to take the bold leap of matrimony. Chrissy, too, had her own fears and doubts about this ball. Bourhope hitherto had only pursued her, if he had pursued her, in rather a secret manner. She would now see how he would treat her on a public occasion. His conduct would then be marked and conspicuous, and even Mrs. Spottis-

woode's and Corrie's eyes would be opened to it. Then, again, he would have an opportunity of contrasting her personally with all the girls about Priorton. Chrissy gazed wistfully into the glass as she fastened her yellowed scrimp old white frock, and sighed. But she did not look so much amiss as she supposed : she was young, slight, and full of subtle character. And with her scarlet coral beads twisted among her dark little turret curls and bows, there was piquancy and attraction in Chrissy. But her first purely disinterested and unbounded pleasure in the gaiety was grievously chequered, and it was to be feared the account she would carry home of her first ball to expectant Blackfaulds, would be disappointing.

There were only two chaises in repair in Priorton, to convey the whole townspeople in rotation to the ball. It was thus unavoidable that some should be very early, as well as some very late. Mr. Spottiswoode, as Provost, was of course among the first after the Colonel and his lady—old country people, who stood arm-in-arm, bluff and bland, under the evergreens over the door, and shook hands with everybody, great and small—a

family of pretty girls meanwhile laughing behind them.

Mrs. Spottiswoode wore a splendid bunch of white feathers tipped with straw-colour in her blue gauze turban. Even Chrissy's dazed eyes noticed that, as well as the white riband in Provost Spottiswoode's bottle-green coat, which pointed him out an honorary steward. But how handsome brown curly Bourhope looked in his red coat!

A strange thought came over Chrissy. She did not wish Corrie, in her white crape and French ribands, and so tall and straight and fair, to be blighted in her beauty—no, not for a moment. But Chrissy was cruel enough to cherish a passing wish that, by some instantaneous transformation, Bourhope might be pitted with small-pox, or scarred with gunpowder, or have premature age brought upon him as with the wave of a wand—the soul within being left unchanged, however.

Mrs. Spottiswoode, unlike Chrissy, was quite alive to the practical. She remarked everything with keen eyes, and determined now to be at the bottom of the business. She should either go in and win triumphantly, or take a sudden tack and sail away

with flying colours, as if she had never entertained the most distant intention of coming to close quarters, and thus give the impression that she never had any intention of promoting a match between Bourhope and Corrie.

Mrs. Spottiswoode thought Bourhope looked as if he were going to do something desperate. His first blunder had been to hand, or rather lift, Chrissy into the chaise instead of Corrie, at starting from their own door. He repeated the unaccountable blunder at the County Rooms, which compelled him to take Chrissy into the ball-room ; and while Chrissy was still gazing in bewilderment and admiration at the evergreens and chalked floors, and talking, laughing couples, Mrs. Spottiswoode could scarcely believe her ears when she distinctly heard Bourhope ask Chrissy's hand for the first dance, saying that he would have engaged it before if he had got the opportunity.

Now Mrs. Spottiswoode had no doubt that Bourhope would solicit her sister Corrie for this dance, and therefore she had peremptorily forbidden Corrie to engage herself in any other quarter, even when Corrie had demurred at the

certainty of the arrangement. It was very odd of Bourhope, unless he thought Chrissy would have no chance of any other partner, and wanted to spare a plain little girl's mortification at the very commencement of the evening. "That must be it," Mrs. Spottiswoode said to herself, and was consoled by Corrie's hand being immediately requested for the Colonel's nephew.

The Colonel's wife opened the ball with the most popular and oldest private for' partner, and, of course, Chrissy and Bourhope stood below Corrie and the Colonel's nephew. But Bourhope and Chrissy did not mind Corrie's precedence, and were talking to each other quite intimately. Bourhope was forgetting the figure and bending across to Chrissy, though he was saying nothing particular, and speaking out quite loud. But he looked engrossed and excited. If it had been any other girl than Chrissy, Mrs. Spottiswoode would have called it a flirtation, and more than a flirtation. Chrissy looked well in her shabby dress, almost pretty indeed, in the new atmosphere. Mrs. Spottiswoode was aggrieved, disgusted in the first instance, but she would not just yet

believe such an incredible contradiction to her well-laid scheme. Match-making involves so many parties, there are such wheels within wheels of calculation and resource. She glanced at Corrie who was dancing very complacently with the Colonel's nephew, and exchanging passing words with yeomen who tried to get speech with her. In her white crape, and teeth as white, and her dimples, she was safe, heart-whole and prosperous—a beauty who might pick and choose a suitable husband, even though Bourhope, infatuated, threw himself away.

Mrs. Spottiswoode gave a sigh of relief. Failure now would only be comparative.

The dance being over, Bourhope sat down beside Chrissy. No, she turned her head the other way, and he rose up and strolled through the room. But he was soon back in his old place.

He wanted to dance with Chrissy again. She hesitated, grew nervous, and cast her eyes on Mrs. Spottiswoode. He went straight across to their hostess, and said, "Mrs. Spottiswoode, you have no objection that I dance this dance again with Miss Chrissy Hunter?"

"None in the world, Bourhope," said Mrs. Spottiswoode, with a spasmodic smile, "why should I?"

"Why, indeed?" he returned, "or every dance? May I tell her so?"

"That is as her and you may agree. You are aware that would appear something serious," she said, trying to laugh.

"I will take the consequences," he significantly assured her, and went back and told Chrissy so, and then he drove her to her inmost citadel, and beat her there.

Other eyes than Mrs Spottiswoode's were attracted to the pair. Half-a-dozen matrons' heads went wagging significantly; girls whispered and tittered; gentlemen opened their eyes, shaped their mouths as if about to whistle, strolled up and took their observations of the pre-occupied, unconscious couple quite coolly, and then speculated and gossipped.

Mrs. Spottiswoode read these comments as well as what had gone before, and was ready with her magnanimity. It was this which constituted her a truly able tactician. She shifted her tack before

the shout of malicious exultation and ridicule could have been raised at her discomfiture. By a dexterous sleight of hand, she shuffled her cards and altered her suit. In a moment Mrs. Spottiswoode was winking and nodding with the matrons interested in the news of the night. She arrested a good-humoured yeoman, and crossed the room on his arm, to express and receive congratulations. "You have found out the secret? Foolish fellow, Bourhope; he cannot conceal his feelings, though their display is premature. I must scold him for exposing himself and her. Poor dear! she is not accustomed to this sort of thing. But I am so delighted—so nice, isn't it? Such an excellent marriage for my cousin Chrissy—a good girl, a very clever girl—such a fortunate beginning for the Blackfaulds family. I often say the first marriage makes or mars a family of girls. It is so lucky that I invited Chrissy for the yeomanry weeks this summer. It is a great deal better than if it had been Corrie, because Corrie can wait," with a careless wave of her hand in the direction in which Corrie moved, deliberately followed by her train. "Corrie has too many

admirers to make up her mind speedily, yet she takes it all very quietly. But this is so appropriate—Mr. Spottiswoode's cousin and my cousin—nobody could have planned it better."


She turned round, and heard a blunt booby of a farmer speaking out his mind. She at once took him up—"You would not have thought it? You cannot comprehend what has come over Bourhope, or what he sees in that thin, yellow mite, Miss Hunter of Blackfaulds, even though she were as good as a saint, and as wise as the Queen of Sheba? Oh! come, Balquin, you do not allow sufficient latitude to goodness and cleverness. I tell you, Bourhope has neither eyes nor ears for anybody but that mite, he counts his colourless daisy far before the gayest painted face. He knows that we are remarking on them now, and he is holding his head as high as if he had sought and won a queen. He is right; she will prove a sensible, cheerful wife to him. Bourhope will have the cleverest, best wife in the county, for all your swaggering. And that is something, when a man comes to be old and has an old wife like me. Not old, Balquin? away with you. I wish the Provost heard you.

Do you think to flatter me because I am in spirits about my cousin's match? No, it is not lost that a friend gets, Balquin."

The public of Priorton did not know whether most to admire Mrs. Spottiswoode's diplomacy, or this rare instance of poetic justice.

THE DAYS OF THE DUTCH FAIR.

I.—THE EVE OF THE KERMIS—VERONICA AND MAURITZ.

“ MUST,” sighs little Veronica, the daughter of Adrian Vanstraelen, on the eve of the great Kermis of Rotterdam; but, while admitting the necessity, the rosy maiden’s wicked fingers pluck into forlorn sprays the myrtle crown—about as lucky an act as to strip the blossoms from an orange-tree bough.

It was on the eve of an important event and a fascinating time. To-morrow would see the beginning of the great Kermis of Rotterdam—that centre of business and joviality—to which, for a whole year, since last celebration in good

sooth! the burghers and the peasant-girls for leagues round had looked longingly. It was in the good days of Holland's prosperity, ere yet England had outstripped her in commerce, and after her own greatest troubles were over. The red caps of the Hooks and the grey caps of the Kabbeljaws were doffed in peace; the Gueux had cast aside their wallets and wooden drinking-cups; and the Stadtholder was firmly established. The feuds between Calvinist and Arminian were quenched in blood; and the tulip mania had gone out in ashes. The sea-worms, the fearfulest enemy of all, had perished in the timely frost, and the spice trade, the China and Japan trades, and the Delft manufacture, were all flourishing; while the painters had won great names, and were beckoning their brother artists to follow in the peaceful path of their renown.

There she lay—that paradox of a country—without hill or rock, yet very dear to the painter's heart. Our hankerings after her green sluggish canals, her Paul Potter cattle, her windmills, her masts of ships actually interlaced with branches of *trees on her yellow brick quays*, bear witness to

this. Her portly "purple-fleshed" burghers, with their banner of trade, and their brave resistance to Alva and Louis XIV., have made a place in our hearts. Familiar to us are her women with their fair apple-blossom complexions, and luxuriant flaxen hair; their round softness in youth, and their solid square proportions in age; their absence of all hair under their ugly linen caps, and their mottled cheeks as they fill the honoured grandmothers' chairs, and supply models to generations of painters for old women knitting, old women peeling onions, old women with spectacles and with hymn-books, such as, with song-books and Bibles, formed their libraries. There is a very fascination in those old Dutch women, in spite of their overgrown bulk and their wrinkled harshness of physiognomy. One loves their honest, sagacious, sometimes careworn faces. Yes, indeed, one hankers also after the drinkers of Teniers, the dashing riders of Wouvermans, the boors' wives and children of Van Ostade, simply because of their common humanity.

That Holland of a century ago—made up of flats and dykes, floating vessels and stationary

wooden houses, and with its blunt buyers and sellers—had its quaint, luxurious, ineffable charm. Its Rotterdam, too, was unique, with its carved gables full five stories in height—beneath, great warehouses—above, flights of broad stairs and lofty doors opening into marble halls and spacious apartments, where were their looms, their egg-shell china, their Rubens, Jan Steen, or Cuyp, their ivory and japan work, their heavy silk and cobweb muslin. And beyond these again there were more private and cosy chambers, with Dutch tiles in their chimneys, curious clocks ticking warningly in the corner, and stands of balsams in the windows, from whence one could get a fair view into the green flutter of the mighty poplar-trees, and even far on till you caught a glimpse of the snow-white sails of some track-boat swaying with the tide, towards the gaunt arms of a windmill, or the red brick “Carillons,” or the “black Dutch steeples.” That Rotterdam—like the women washing their hands in silver basins, the burly men with their open shirt necks, the cows placidly chewing their cuds at evening, in our galleries—was in its own way unequalled.

And so was the bustle for the Kermis. The countrymen in buff hats were busy erecting the booths and decorating them with flowers, under the shade of the trees ; low waggons drawn by great black horses, were rumbling along, laden with merchandise of all kinds ; the Frieslanders and the women of Groningen, ruddy and robust, with their head-dresses of gold plates and rich lace, were laying out their wares, their lively tongues already screaming with excitement. There were caravans with bears, tigers, monkeys, and parrots, whose owners quarrelled for precedence ; rope-dancers raising their tents ; jugglers and buffoons already practising their legerdemain, and covering the bumpkins with ridicule ; and strangers from learned Leyden and the courtly Hague, from Utrecht and from Amsterdam, in a profusion of buckles and buttons, and in the long coats common to our ancestors, quietly surveying the scene, and doubtless making their own comments.

The Kermis was a great affair in old Rotterdam. It was a great affair to Adrian Vanstraelen, as to other merchants. Perhaps it was even a more important thing to Adrian

than to others; for the prosperity of his old house was somewhat on the wane, and it needed the anniversary to fill his warehouses with customers, and to bring his correspondents' vessels three abreast to his quay. Besides all which, Adrian had private views with regard to this Kermis, which rendered it of special interest to him and likely to be remembered throughout his life.

They say there are two great types of Dutchmen—the lean, yellow, scheming, eager politician, always shaking his skinny forefinger, and advancing his long, self-conceited head among the blue flasks and long glasses; and the portly, solemn, sublime Dutchman, the indomitable, cool, unflinching doer. But Adrian Vanstraelen belonged to neither. He must have been a singular man; for he represented a class who stand alone and individual, at once honoured and laughed at by their contemporaries, and spoken of as dreamers, and “too good for this world.” He had a “giant forehead and child-like eyes.” He was a profound man, yet a simple one, guileless to excess in his gruffness. He had conducted many a

azardous undertaking ; had proposed many a magnanimous scheme ; had been listened to, and followed half-way, then forsaken, frowned at, and finally forgiven. As he had a large intellect, one might have fancied he could, on his own fair principles, have managed an extensive business, at once to his own advantage and the benefit of his neighbours ; but unfortunately his talents were not well adapted to trade. He would have made a better painter, poet, professor, or divine. He was too ideal, generalized overmuch ; the hard-headed and hard-fisted got before him ; and the old house of Vanstraelen, which in its turn had employed Rembrandt, sent a cadet in the galliot with Van Tromp, and had owned lugger after lugger riding triumphantly in the Spanish main, was gradually dwindling to decay. Adrian was grieved to the heart. He had conscientiously adhered to the business, which had fallen to him by inheritance, and in following which he thought he could be most useful to his country. He had sat in his office and stood on his quay perseveringly, denying himself communion with Nature, dear to him as to Paul Potter and Ruysdael themselves,

and had thrown aside his sciences of government and theology, which had filled both brain and heart to no purpose—so far, at least, as the prosperity of his family was concerned.

Adrian had no son, and Veronica was his only child. He was resolved to marry Veronica so as to redeem his position in some degree. To marry the dear child honourably and lovingly, of course; but still in such a way as to check the decline of the house, and infuse fresh strength and energy into it. Next to his duty to God, country, and child, was Adrian's duty to the house—the honourable, dignified house of Vanstraelen. It was easy to unite both interests. There were plenty of likely, worthy young fellows—scions of the old mercantile families of Holland, just returned from the students' classes at Utrecht or Leyden, from a trip to Batavia, or better still, from a strict apprenticeship to commerce—who would be right willing to wed Veronica, combine forces, and so revive the spent activity of the past.

Adrian Vanstraelen had even fixed upon his man, had exchanged credentials with his parents, *and* appointed the bridegroom to appear at the

present Kermis. Very warmly did the old merchant desire the conclusion of the treaty. He had even arranged, that parties being agreed, the betrothal and the marriage should be celebrated simultaneously, before Herr Heemkirk returned to Delft. Herr Adrian had certainly not founded his choice upon prudential motives alone. Delft, great in pottery, and priding itself in the tombs of Father William and Grotius, was yet small among Dutch towns ; and Herr Heemkirk's father, though the owner of the greatest pottery, and a magnate in Delft, was only, after all, a moderate man in busy, ship-besieged Rotterdam. But Adrian had an old connection with the respectable family of Heemkirk. He had visited Delft in later years, and had taken a great fancy to young Mauritz Heemkirk, and was determined that he and no other should be the husband of his good roguish Veronica, always, however, anticipating her approbation and consent. Vanstraelen had no reason to doubt his daughter's docility. Dutch girls did not learn their catechism to so little purpose as to leave them utterly perverse and rebellious, although doubtless *they had* their humours and fancies.

Those Dutch maidens who dwelt in the Boomjees, and gazed dreamily down on the poplars and willows, the shipping and the canal, were very much like other damsels, else their apple-blossom complexions and forget-me-not eyes would have faded them as irresistible attractions. They must have had their passions, their struggles, their tragedies, and their comedies, too ; but they were conducted quietly and modestly, with a maidenly propriety that veiled all so prettily and pathetically—coy joy as well as heavy heart-break.

Veronica had her full share of these feelings and fancies. But she was not exactly the representative of Dutch maidens, any more than her father was of Dutch men. She was Veronica Vanstraelen, and there could not perhaps have been found another of exactly similar character and tastes in the whole republic. Only in her beauty Veronica belonged to the highest Dutch type. She was fair and soft, with quantities of silken-flaxen hair, plaited into basket-work, and carried above and behind her little head ; her eyes were bluer than anything on earth except the Mayence forget-me-not, and could only have been matched by the

blue summer sky ; and she had cheeks so like the apple-blossom or those balsams she and her aunt Katrina were such adepts in rearing, that no mortal had ever seen anything else in the material universe so fresh and fair. A sea-shell was too delicate, a blush rose too dim, a carnation too crimson in comparison ; and then her neck—there never was such a pillar of soft milky whiteness !

Veronica had been brought up a good deal alone as a girl. Without brother or sister, and with her mother in an early grave, her father and her aunt Katrina had allowed her the free use of her faculties and imagination. She had been taught housekeeping and gardening in full measure, and had been thoroughly, seriously drilled in religious knowledge. As for reading beyond this, and writing, history, painting, and the harpsichord—these were given in limited doses. But notwithstanding this staid regimen, Veronica had as much romance in her heart as would be found in the wild, diamond-eyed Arab woman in her tent, or the meek, almond-eyed Indian woman in her wigwam ; only it had been tolerably bridled up by a *grave, reverential Dutch training*. She had

her song-book and her Rhenish legends ; she had her traditions of brave, hardly-used Jacqueline of Holland and Hainault ; of the dames who sent their hearts afloat with De Ruyter ; of the ladies who remained widowed for the friends of the De Witts ; of the women, too, who smote the stony rock and brought sobs and tears of penitence from the brutal buccaneers. And if these had failed, Veronica would still have kept hold of Rachel so sweet and beautiful, of poor Leah slighted and scorned, of Ruth claiming the regard of Boaz, and of stately Esther eliciting the love of lordly Ahasuerus.

But Veronica, with her thoughtfulness, her romance, and her tempered blitheness, was dutiful to her father and dearly loved him, grieving with a girl's impulsive sorrow and apprehension at the stoop in his broad shoulders, the profuse silver gathering in his hair and beard ; and so she said, "I must," though she would much rather have had it "I must not." The heaviest demand that had yet been made upon her forbearance and gentleness was this matter of marrying Mauritz Heemkirk, and she sighed pettishly, and broke *her myrtle crown*.

Veronica did not know Mauritz, save from hearsay. What tidings had reached her of the lad were far from favourable, except, of course, her father's evidence, which she could not in this case consider valuable. Veronica's cousin Hans was often in Delft, and his accounts were not by any means inspiriting. Hans, it was true, had himself been foolish, and had wished to marry Veronica at one time; but then he was fully aware that she was now irrevocably destined for another, and had no conceivable motive for traducing Mauritz. Veronica's friend, Jacqueline Netcher, had also visited Delft, and she had directed such stores of disparaging mockery against Herr Mauritz! Jacqueline, it must be said, was always seeking admiration, and offended if she did not get it; but then she knew perfectly well that the heir of the great pottery, the tulip gardens, the butter-casks, the bales, the nut-walk, the iris-coloured house, and the clipped box-trees was months ago bespoken for Veronica Vanstraelen. Jacqueline's testimony was surely impartial, and could not be coloured in any way by mortification. A great, hulking *Dutch youth*, with a heavy countenance and an

uncertain laugh, what were his pots, his tulips, his cheese, his box-trees to Veronica? What to her his reputation of being a good son, an obliging neighbour, a benevolent master, or a promising trader? What even the conviction that when he did conquer his taciturnity ~~he must~~ have spoken to the point, to have so satisfied her gracious and gifted father of his mental and moral superiority? They had sealed her fate. Had her father run mad and proposed to marry her to a wicked man or a downright fool, she might in conscience have resisted; as it was, she could only prepare for this dull, sluggish, virtuous, and sensible Mauritz the Silent, wring her hands and cry "I must."

Those poor, good, patient women who wed at a lifted finger—those young German princesses who cross kingdoms to a stout meat-loving Jerome Buonaparte or a savage Czar of Muscovy—alas for their crushed wills, their writhing hearts!

Veronica, though a good child, was sensitive and impetuous, so that her lighter burden and easier fate did not much relieve her trouble. On the *eve of this Kermis*, she was no longer in a bevy

of girls watching the crowds in the Boomjees, or selecting fairings ; no longer spinning in the little parlour or dishing those pink preserved pears for her father's supper ; no longer tying up her roses in the garden, or painting in the summer-house, dressed in her brocaded skirt, her velvet bodice, her fringed boots, and her jewelled stomacher —she was seated with her hands crossed on her lap in miserable, nervous idleness. Beside her sat her father, in his superfine broadcloth. He had just laid down his pipe and was walking up and down in the fever of expectant waiting ; while Aunt Katrina, in her rustling silk dress, was counting the dishes on her fingers and tacking the lace to the rich toilette cover in the spacious visitors' room, amidst the old ancestral furniture and the unfading pictures. And for poor Veronica there was nothing but the reflection that throughout Rotterdam, in hall and cabinet, busy tongues would keep repeating, "Poor Rika Vanstraelen ! she is to be presented to-night to her uncouth bridegroom ! What a trial for Rika ! How we pity her ! She was spoilt by her father and aunt, and so thought *herself somebody* ; and now to be married offhand

to a mere trader and banished to the wooden houses and the 'storks of little Delft'." For it had been arranged that the couple were to reside at Delft to establish the great house of Vanstraelen there; and that when Adrian himself should retire from the head house at Rotterdam, then they should return.

Sometimes Veronica fancied she would die within the year, and thought how much her father and Aunt Katrina would mourn her. Her heart actually rose to her mouth as she suppressed her sobs when this possibility fixed itself in her imagination. At other times a wicked spirit would suggest as a relief that she should break a certain person's heart and cause him to desert or discard her, and so suffer her the sooner to return to her old father.

The bells of the old steeple were now ringing the hour at which the Stellwagen rattled into the market-place and the canal-boat was towed to the pier. Many joyous travellers would be leaping out; many glad hearts would be awaiting them; and all would be stir and blitheness in the city. *It was hard that Veronica alone should feel*

sorrowful and reluctant. The child had never known any disappointment ; she had never borne unpleasant shocks, or experienced cruel tests of her self-control. But there were steps on the stairs, and a grand commotion began. Adrian Vanstraelen turned eagerly to the door, Aunt Katrina winked and nodded her head, and poor Veronica shrunk into herself as a stranger stumbled into the room. Herr Mauritz had chosen to walk from the last village, and was consequently dusty and disordered in dress and air. In this state he was introduced into the merchant's mansion on the Boomjees. Perhaps he desired solitude and sought to escape observation ; and to gratify his young passion, or from an amiable fear that his feat might occasion disappointment, he had walked so fast as to exhaust himself, and hence the detriment to his personal appearance. But he was a great, overgrown boy ; in fact, a sloven of a man. He entered awkwardly, greeting them with considerable trepidation, and drawing back from saluting more than the tips of Veronica's fingers.

Although Veronica was very wretched, she was *the first to recover her presence of mind.* She

took careful note of Mauritz, and had to confess to herself that he was an unready, unmannerly fellow. She tingled over occasionally with scornful laughter, even amidst a deep inclination to weep. She really could not repress a laugh at his offering a box of rare tulip roots to Aunt Katrina, of all persons in the world! Such a gift for a bridegroom, and so bestowed! Veronica desired no costly bribe, no addition to her substantial, splendid bridal finery, in which she found quite insufficient consolation; but here was another instance of Mauritz's oddity: for the Dutch, with their business habits, had, in their acquisition of French fashions, learned with peculiar facility the habit of giving massive and extensive corbeilles, including cloth and linen, furs and laces, watches and rings.

And there was Herr Mauritz already reclining, cross-legged, quiescent, in the corner of the window-seat, just as Hans had described him sitting before the stove in winter. He was listening to Adrian's cordial inquiries and wise remarks, occasionally casting towards him in return the merest *monosyllables*, and appearing indeed rather pen-

sive than exhilarated. No marvel that Veronica was self-conscious and constrained, and did not utter one happy sentence, notwithstanding that the little girl usually commanded that crystal ripple of cheerfulness which often lights up a meditative nature.

Herr Mauritz was solemnly devout at prayers : he ate perseveringly at supper ; but Veronica saw no more of him. She asked her father's blessing, and retired as soon as she dared to that most spotless sanctuary, a Dutch maiden's bed-chamber. But some uncomely guests shared it with her that night—the hags, Disappointment and Chagrin—whom she beat down and tried to shake off, but could not conquer. Ah ! Adrian Vanstraelen, your wise plans and good intentions have brought wild disorder into a gentle heart !

II.—THE FIGHT WITH THE ZEALANDERS.

Aunt Katrina thought Veronica a very lucky girl ; Mauritz was such a sober, thoughtful, worthy young man, and also well to do ! She had heard that *Fräu Heemkirk* owned the deepest

linen presses, and grew the finest balsams in Delft; and Herr Mauritz was the eldest son! And then Delft was so near, and yet not too near, Veronica might take the track-boat sometimes, though she need not for ever be running away from her darning and her baking. And such a quilt she had embroidered for Veronica, and so sweet were her muslins, and so stiff her silks! So sang the old lady; but such songs will not always captivate young ears. Aunt Katrina was besotted, sitting there in her cape, with her tight lace cap peaked down on her wrinkled forehead; actually thinking how well she would have liked to have been as luckily disposed of in her youth, and dropping some gentle sighs of regret over the fate which had made her spend many weary lonely days managing her brother Adrian's house, and trying to be a mother to his child.

Adrian next morning sought a word with his daughter. He did not scold her, for he was always very tender and indulgent, without being in any way sentimental. His sentences smacked rather of the rough humour which distinguishes the tone of many a genuine philanthropist.

“My child, it is right well that a maiden be modest before her bridegroom. But there is a medium ; try and avoid extremes. A youth—an honest, deep, still youth—with something in him, and not an empty, chattering coxcomb, needs some talk and encouragement. To be ‘as mute as a fish,’ reminds one that a fish is cold and slippery. I have passed my word, Veronica, and am not mocking my friend, or asking him to put up with less than his due, and this is a peculiar case. Heemkirk’s son is not in short-sighted folks’ eyes a match for Vanstraelen’s daughter. But he is a worthy lad. So, although fishing is a refreshing pastime in this summer weather, and stewed fish is a savoury dish, do not, I pray you, my daughter, let us have too much of the association. If you love me, keep everything in its proper place and proportion.”

Veronica now felt the narrow ladder knocked from beneath her feet. She had dressed herself in her brocade and family stomacher, and had not taken any treacherous means to disfigure herself. She had not brought on a swollen face, or inflamed her eyes with forced tears ; with all a woman’s n-

consistency and improvidence, she had impolitically looked her best. But it must be confessed she had entertained a faint hope that Mauritz might haply find her even as waxen and matter-of-fact as his mother's balsams—too lifeless even for the wife of a Dutch trader! And if she was thus to exert herself to entertain this Delft monster—ascertain his tastes and defer to his opinions—there was for her no hope, none in the world.

Oh! if Herr Mauritz had but entertained some previous attachment, or inclined to incorrigible bachelorhood! He was eccentric enough for the latter, but he had informed her father that there was no impediment whatever on his side, and that if inclinations served, he would be honoured in becoming his son-in-law. The moodiness and melancholy which she had detected in his countenance on the preceding evening, she felt must be engrained in his temperament—another of his great attractions, though neither Hans nor Jacqueline had insisted upon it when they proclaimed his characteristics.

At breakfast, Mauritz was certainly livelier *than* on the preceding night, but still he seemed

only a tall raw youth, whose singularities were exaggerated by his French coat and three-cornered hat, which he carried in under his arm. His dress contrasted unfavourably with Adrian Vanstraelen's old Dutch costume—voluminous vest of richest colours, breeches of sumptuous pile tied at the knee, and high fur cap—not by any means an unbecoming costume for a man of large bulk and stately presence. Mauritz's hair, or rather his wig, was combed back, and formed a cluster of fair curls on his back. The beard was still of so slight growth as to expose a ponderousness of temple and jaw; and Veronica in her rashness did not pause to reflect that the heaviness of face which she condemned, proceeded in great part from the very same massiveness of head she was wont to admire in her father.

The suitor did not address Veronica very pointedly, but he talked pleasantly enough with Aunt Katrina. When Veronica, in compliance with her father's hint, and in answer to an appeal from his loving but resolute eye, forced herself to utter a few disjointed observations on the country, the Kermis, and *other things*, he turned quickly, and met

her advances with sufficient grace and self-command. He remarked intelligently too on the pictures on the walls—the sea-fights, the family groups, the fruit pieces; but then he confessed that he had a dear friend in Herr Leuwenhock, the poor but rising painter.

The girl could not continue to despise their guest, but it was sad enough to stop short only at contempt! Veronica knew herself young, and instinctively felt that she was capable of high hopes and strong regards; and after having been so many years Adrian Vanstraelen's darling, it was not easy to sink down contentedly into Mauritz Heemkirk's housewife. Indeed, a simple spectator might have sympathised and condoled with her;—for the half-loutish young man, so phlegmatic and sombre, and the little girl as charming as the morning in her chintz, her white cap, and her white linen gloves laid ready to her hand when she chose to go abroad, did seem a somewhat unnatural match.

It was a relief when the clamour already rising from the Boomjees, and the urgent demands of business—for new customers were pouring in from *all* quarters of Holland—called away the gentle-

men, and the women were left to their household engagements. Their contemplation of Veronica's stores of private property, their reception of fresh additions to her coffers, and their distant contemplation of the business and gaiety of the Kermis from the long windows, were a welcome change until such time as Veronica sallied out, properly attended, to make the crowning additions to her *ménage*. These could only be obtained at the fair. They were homely articles, but noteworthy in a Dutch girl's estimation—cloth from Utrecht, damask linen from Germany brooms from this village, cutlery from that town, nets from the coast, and wicker work from the interior. Dutch women of their degree were not free to walk abroad in the Kermis without a male escort. At a later period, indeed, it would not have been considered proper for a girl in Veronica's position to have shown herself in the throng at all; but at this time it was still quite decorous for such as her to countenance the country maidens and the peasant brides by affording them an example of forethought and discretion in the selection she made of the homely furniture of her future domestic life,

and by her special prudence and care in the hey-day of her love, and youthfulness, and prosperity. Many a worn, grey-haired wife, clung fondly to the shabby old basket or dilapidated red umbrella, because she could say, "I bought it at the Kermis before my marriage, when my father and mother first trusted me with a purse full of guilders, and Franz looked on and laughed to see every groschen laid out upon our house, because it convinced him of the reality of our going together."

But poor Veronica by no means craved this rather ostentatious shopping. She was sick already of the Kermis—of its dust, its trundling wheels, its bawling, its gingerbread. She earnestly wished for the return of those quiet days when the vessels glided past the huge willow trees, and one had time to view the watch-tower on the bridge, and the mighty piles and palisades stealing out of the amber haze of a morning, and sinking again into the dove's-neck hues of evening.

The quiet Dutch are apt to go to excess a little at their annual fairs. Temperate men at these times drink more than Seltzer water, and the demure milkmaids bounce about with unlimited

se, enjoying the luxurious good cheer, amid wds of acquaintances. There are abundant fun d mischief, and, though ordinarily good-natured, tch fun is boisterous, rude, and tending to riot.

the first day of the Kermis, before the hour of on, a fight suddenly broke out on the Boomjees, d hostile masses of Zealanders and Brabanters re struggling and pushing here and there. They re shouting vociferously, mauling each other, persing unconcerned passengers, and bringing lers leaping from the decks of their ships in ir dusky red jerkins, and with the disagreeable ociation of cutlasses, to mingle in the *mêlée*.

Aunt Katrina turned her back on the discord. e boors should not be encouraged, she said; : might see something to shock her. She pre- ed looking out her plasters to distribute ough a steady warehouseman. Aunt Katrina st have put considerable check on her inclina- is, for the tendency to look with excited eyes strife of every kind—from the struggles of a sman to the progress of a blazing building or water-logged boat—is a feature of the feminine racter. The buxom maids of the establish-

ment, in their coarse lace caps, their striped petticoats, and purple or yellow stockings, darted to the windows, doors, and balconies; while Veronica stood fixed between the floating curtains which fell around her like a nun's veil, and gazed down on the coarse violence in the streets.

Suddenly an exclamation burst from Veronica's lips. There, in the tumult, was young Mauritz Heemkirk, dealing blows with the others, and attempting to wrest knives and sticks out of the hands of his opponents. Veronica could scarcely believe her eyes. But it was certainly her bridegroom, and he seemed to have a sense of her proximity too, for he looked hurriedly up in the midst of his struggles, while she had but a moment to draw back and avoid meeting his eye, ere he set-to again with redoubled fury. Veronica was perfectly thunderstruck. What could he possibly have to do with such a brawl? He scarcely appeared the same man as she had seen before. And what should she now make of her discovery? Ought she to announce his trouble, to the horror of Aunt Katrina? or should she despatch to his aid a household brigade, in the shape of the maids and

old Peter, the trusty warehouseman, the only persons available, the others being at the booths where Adrian Vanstraelen, as well as smaller men, displayed his wares? or should she send a messenger by a back way to find and apprise her father? or throw forward a scout to look out for the soldiers, and incur the responsibility of hurrying their attendance in the names of the Honourable Adrian Vanstraelen and his son-in-law elect?

Was the youth in danger? A year later, had Veronica seen him in such a scene, she would have shrieked and rushed out on the pavement, and, pushing her way to the combatants, would have clasped his knees as she had seen wives hang upon men who had fallen from scaffoldings, or who had been torn from shedding each other's life blood. But deadly blows were now being dealt, fitted to fire Veronica's heart. How Mauritz's chest swelled, and his blue eyes gleamed! What a strong, fierce young man! Here he gave a stroke which sent a brawny Islander spinning to the roots of the poplar trees, nigh the edge of the canal; there he reeled against the shock of a double rush *from two Flushing smugglers*. He did not look

up to Veronica again, and forgot to make for the merchant's house. Veronica saw that at the head of a party of Brabanters he still fought honestly and doggedly. He had no mind to solicit help ; he had got into the spirit of the encounter, and was waxing dangerous. Veronica was startled to find herself actually admiring him, comparing him to Father William coming to deliver them from Alva—to Van der Werf offering his body to his wolf-eyed townsmen sooner than yield Leyden to the Spaniard.

Ah ! that was a murderous, treacherous back-thrust ! Veronica could contain herself no longer, but screamed aloud, and bent forward from the open window and cried out, "Mauritz, beware ! save thyself !" He was not hurt, and at that very moment a company of Dutch soldiers in the blue and red uniform—so often represented in leaden and wooden models an inch long, that the very originals themselves have a certain leaden and wooden air—tramped into the Boomjees, while Veronica, covered with confusion and trepidation, sprang back and flung herself into her grandmother's *chair*. Presently all the women in the house were

round her, uttering exclamations, seeking explanations, till they were dispersed suddenly by Adrian entering the hall, and talking to a companion all the way up stairs—"My dear son, you must take the world more quietly; true, it was quite shameful, the Zealander was seizing a villainous advantage, and the poor little Brabanter was being robbed of his rights. I allow it was hard for an honest man of any spirit to stand aside and witness it, or to pass by and connive at it: but you must be more of a philosopher, like me. What? I would have done the same at your age? Nay, Nay! If the military had not come up just at the moment they did, your bones would have been broken. What? it would not have signified? Ask Veronica about that; the good folks of Rotterdam will hold you a fire-eater hereafter, in place of a worthy shopkeeper." So Herr Adrian lectured Mauritz, half lightly, half seriously, with a strong dash of banter, and a lurking tinge of sympathy, at which a formalist would not have been much pleased.

But Mauritz Heemkirk, in spite of the words *muttered in his own defence*, looked quite crest-

fallen under the moderate censure. Veronica had been terrified lest her voice had reached him; but when she got a glimpse of the Delfter hanging his head so pitifully, his coat torn and splashed, and his cocked hat all over with mud, she felt relieved, and plucked up spirit enough to say, "Oh! Herr Mauritz, your curls have certainly been caught among the green boughs," and then ran off to her own room. She had been diverted by this interlude. She was disappointed, however, to find that Herr Mauritz did not improve after it. It seemed to exhaust him for the day—so shy and awkward was he.

The Vanstraelens had country relations arriving to take up quarters with them for the Kermis. They had deferred their arrival in consideration of the interest and importance of the previous evening, and had naïvely determined to take full benefit, not only of the Kermis, but also of the approaching marriage. Some men do not shine among those to whom they were recently strangers, and among whom they are suddenly elevated to importance. The more those close around them, they shrink back; the more they

press them, the more they retire. Dutch William, Father William's true descendant, was not reckoned a hero when first he descended on England—indeed is hardly a hero yet with the attitudinizers, and speech-makers, and lovers of the boards.

Mauritz made no progress with the country friends of his bride; but women are better dispensers of courtesy than men. Veronica was showing her country friends her trays of stockings, and piles of linen, dimity, and lace, and wiping away the heavy tears in her blue eyes, while Mauritz got absorbed and blundered, and never even offered to assist them to the sweet cake which she had worn herself into a state of nervousness with preparing. Veronica really could not put up with him. Why was he not contradictory and aggressive, as he had shown himself in the streets? She could have borne that better. Was it to be her fate to die of inanition? A great writer, of whom Veronica could not have heard, sets down a bridegroom's worst offence as being not barbarity, nor brutality, but the entirely negative disqualification:—

“The bridegroom stood dangling his bonnet and plume.”

Veronica did not know the words, but she experienced the sense of them, and she retreated to her spotless chamber under a renewed harvest of chagrin.

III.—THE WIDOW'S STEWARD.

The second day, Mauritz Heemkirk did not appear at the Vanstraelens' fragrant breakfast-table. While the guests stirred their steaming coffee, and stroked their beards, and looked curiously at Veronica, who blushed with mingled shame and vexation, as she sat in her morning gown of nankin, whose soft, buff colour would have suited no complexion but that of a warm brunette, or a balsam-cheeked Hollander, a note was delivered to Herr Adrian. He read, frowned a little, and, as he was a frank man amongst his own friends, he broke out a little pettishly, "Now, this is too much of my honourable son-in-law! Yes, yes, feed the widow, and clothe her too if you like, but also mind your own business;" and Adrian here glanced from out below his brown eyebrows at his daughter.

“Make your excellent father’s purchases, for which you have little enough time; learn the details of my connection (the Vanstraelen interests were not wont to be easily mastered—I once found them more difficult than mastering Latin under my beloved Professor Moglius, that, however, is neither here nor there)—but why make thyself a sign-post and gazing-stock to their high mightinesses of Rotterdam?”

Adrian Vanstraelen was a noble, an admirable man; but he had his weaknesses and his prejudices. He was inclined to maintain the honours of Vanstraelen at a great expense. He was unwilling to compromise himself with those who ranked far below him in the aristocracy of virtue and intellect by anything beyond the pale of caste and custom; he was a trader of Rotterdam, and loved what savoured of magnificence. Mauritz had broken bounds yesterday, but that might pass as a young man’s frolic. That was the ebullition of an honourable man in a just cause; and though, by some, such generosity might be mistaken for senseless riot, insane arrogance, licentious vagabondism, he was not inclined to

deal too severely with it. But to-day, when Mauritz was found sitting in the crockery booth of widow Prinzer—who had been disappointed in an agent to undertake her sale, and who would be ruined if there were any mistake or misconduct in the final disposal of her late husband's property—there could be no doubt that the young man was performing a charitable act. Nor did he scorn to discharge the trust with his own hands—for the care of this finest lot of Dutch china, copied from priceless Eastern jars, or the original designs of great artists, was, like the transfer of the finest roots of tulips during the mania, a very responsible business.

“Very benevolent,” said the country friends, “and very disinterested; but a Delfter has, doubtless, a peculiar interest in crockery.” A little sneer accompanied this speech, for of course the agriculturists, the rape-growers, and the tile-venders were jealous of Adrian Vanstraelen's throwing away his daughter on a potter, and finding no more suitable match nearer home. But Adrian was soon pacified. His heart easily warmed to kindness and condescension. By the

rades of Erasmus, Barneveldt, and Father William himself, he would visit Mauritz at his counter, and, before the haughtiest merchant in Rotterdam who disposed of his merchandise in ship loads and closed his fist to the famishing poor, he would beat down a mug for Rika.

Veronica did not very well know how to regard this proceeding of Mauritz. It was odd, but then it was independent; and she would have fancied him shrinking from notoriety and melting away, poor bashful creature, under its penalty. Cousin Hans and Jacqueline Netscher would jeer at him, of course. They had called and asked her if Herr Heemkirk was going to set up business for himself in Rotterdam, or if he was only engaged in a speculation to last the termis? They even asked why it was not a shooting gallery, or a hunt for shoes, or a contest for spiced cake that he had commenced with? Then, to be sure, Veronica held up her head and answered, like a true girl, that Herr Mauritz was redeeming a friend from loss, working for a poor woman, and preventing knavery. It was not every one who would bestow time and attention on such

a matter. Yes, it was true Herr Mauritz was singular, but she hoped they would excuse his ways, and not decline to meet him at the great gathering of her friends in the evening. And yet all the time the little hypocrite Veronica was under the most dastardly apprehension about the poor figure Mauritz Heemkirk would cut in their company, and bemoaned her father's resolution, and the hard necessity which connected her with so dull and shabby a bridegroom.

They did Veronica good, those gossips—Hans with his audacious attempt to resume old cousinly familiarities, Jacqueline with her cool overtures to be admitted to her confidence. Veronica was determined to judge for herself. She would see the spectacle which had made so many in the Kermis shrug their shoulders and ask how Adrian Vanstraelen could possibly have picked up for son-in-law a madder enthusiast than himself, and even speculate how many bills the Herr Assessor would give on the extinction of the time-honoured firm of Vanstraelen before the close of the century.

Veronica persuaded her father that some of the broom-venders and knife-grinders and mat-weavers,

whom it was incumbent on her to patronise, would not wait for the end of the Kermis, but would decamp as soon as their commodities were disposed of. So she would not wait for Herr Mauritz, but sally out under the protection of her father and Aunt Katrina, with the female cousins in her train, and execute her commissions in the Kermis without loss of time.

In truth, Adrian was only too glad to see Veronica once more show a little animation and wilfulness in her arrangements, and spontaneously do something which looked like furthering the wish of his heart—her union with Mauritz Heemkirk.

So out they went, into the thunder of the Kermis. The town was actually getting tipsy, and behaving as if, like the valetudinarians of the day, it needed to be bled once a year, to be relieved of its plethoric gravity and sobriety, in order to keep it in healthy condition. Booths stood everywhere decorated with green boughs and branches of guilder roses ; with Dutch-like posies of peonies and tulips, purple and white, cream-coloured and crimson, straw-coloured and burnt umber ; as well as

with bachelors' buttons, streaming ribbons, and gilded pinnacles and balls. Customers and pleasure-seekers in thousands thronged the streets, in every variety of costume gazing on the display. There were long vests and doublets ; boots for the marshes, reaching to the knee ; rich fur-lined mantles ; broad belts with gleaming buckles, studded with Amsterdam cut diamonds, like the stones in Veronica's stomacher ; queer little straw cauls, like the linen cauls of the old women ; ruddy gold earrings, like those which Eleazar of Damascus laid with the bracelet in Rebekah's tawny hand ; cardinal's stockings, and great shady hats like that under which Rubens painted his wife. There were goods of every description—white rice, russet rye, blue raisins, green figs, and glittering herrings caught on the Doggerbank, where less quiet deeds than fishing were wont to be done. Flanders cloth, and French silk were here also, and spices from other swamps than the cold flats of Holland—swamps where the bamboo withers in the deadly breath of the Upas tree. There were little birds of paradise with tiny bodies and tails like the plumes of angels, gaudy popinjays, mocking

monkeys (for the Dutch ladies had their pets and plagues as well as their neighbours); horses of heavy make, and fleet jennets, tokens of the Spanish yoke, and sleek hounds ready for the chase in the green glades of the Bosch, which stretched away around Leyden, and which Wouvermans and Sneyders frequented. There was even a stall of Bibles—Bibles which formed the favourite sign of the inns, along with angels and some member of the house of Father William—Bibles vast in size, colossal in type, and in costly binding, according to native fancy.

There were the usual amusements, not very improving, but excelling by reason of their buoyancy and boisterousness. Boys cast knives at soft cakes, and some people engaged in the fine family game—a species of innocent rouge-et-noir—which consisted in rolling a ball till it stopped on a certain number, the prize being as many Dutch dolls, baby-houses, or butter-slices, as the figure on the square warranted. In spite of the frowning pastors, there was plenty of more objectionable gambling, such as emptied the pockets of Oliver Goldsmith, when he was a student at Leyden.

But Vanstraelen and his party were not idle gadabouts or spendthrifts.

Adrian and Veronica, shielded in her Ruben's wife's hat, and holding fast to her father's arm, along with aunt Katrina and the cousins in their mantles and veils, passed along greeting their friends and nodding to humble acquaintances. They were hailed with acclamation, because they were meeting the old City requirement of propriety and notability—the heiress Fräulein Vanstraelen completing her paraphernalia at the Kermis, thriftily and skilfully, like less-portioned brides. Some stranger, catching the murmur, supposed one of the country cousins to be the bride : Veronica was only too glad to find a substitute, and so Roschen Baumgarten was highly gratified to trip and beck and titter with the abdicated sceptre.

Adrian would buy a Bible for his daughter. Veronica trembled a little at the purchase. She felt that when her own name and Mauritz Heemkirk's were written on the fly-leaf, it would be as good as the wedding-vow pronounced between them. She knew she was captious and bold, but she constantly asked herself the question, Whether a Dutch

maiden should seek aught else than a God-fearing, upright young man, whom her father approved, as her shield, her right hand and head? To this the girl's nature answered No.

She peered inquisitively in the direction of the crockery stalls, and yonder to be sure, sat Herr Mauritz, surrounded by pipkins, teapots, and scaramouches, and pagodas, and looking wonderfully at his ease, directing satellites, satisfying purchasers, taking in payment, and recording sales.

Come hither, young maidens, who would only see your wooers among knights tilting in tournaments, among poets penning sonnets, or reformers by one flourish healing the sores of humanity! Look you, there sits big-boned, ruddy Mauritz Heemkirk, executing a piece of trader's benevolence, lofty enough, perhaps, to rank as a duty, though even Adrian Vanstraelen doubts whether it may not demean him. Still it unquestionably betokens a certain manliness and great self-respect. Mauritz is not blundering, hesitating, or halting now. He is erect, decided, rapid, as well as patient and painstaking. Dutch William was not stiff when, amid the roar of cannon, he turned three

regiments, and led them against the intolerance and bigotry of Louis le Grand. Mauritz has just disposed of an article for the owner at the full rate, and he smiles a broad, bright smile. A painter cleverly takes his likeness as he presides among warehousemen and clerks in his cauliflower curls and embroidered coat, and dubs it "Dutch eagerness in the career of barter." Mauritz observes this, notices the grin of the beholders, catches at the sketch, and scrutinizes it; and with a mellow laugh mantling over his face, he returns it politely to the artist. There are situations in which a man can well afford to be caricatured. Mauritz is not embarrassed even when his bride and her party bear down upon him. After all, Adrian Vanstraelen is not ashamed of the equivocal occupation of his son-in-law, but begins to relish it and feel a pride in it. Mauritz receives them all cheerfully, and is anxious to display to them those quaint, brilliant Sèvres-like panels — a groundwork of delicate lilac or soft blue, the centre space brushed clear and glowing with luscious fruit, radiant flowers, or trim and gallant figures devised by a

itchman. Truly beyond the turmoil of this Amsterdam lies the green, cultivated, lazy country, in which many a pencil labours to reproduce its richness and repose; and among those Dutch argomasters and boors, their wives and daughters, and old-fashioned children, rises many a head distinct with rare sagacity and tenderness. And indeed, one need not fear to assert that under the precise domesticity, industry, and acidity of this trading Dutch land there exists many a phase of genial picturesqueness and ivalry.

Mauritz is confused only when Adrian Van-aelen prices an exquisite sweetpot for his daughter. Mauritz had laid it aside; he purposed himself to purchase it, and to present it—to Aunt Katrina!

Adrian laughs a loud laugh—"My lad, the old use in the Boomjees is crammed with furniture and toys; if you cannot venture on handing your rings to friends more needing, then buy them yourself, Mauritz, buy them for your own cabinets;" and he contents himself with taking the plainest apple-dish for Veronica. Aunt

Katrina insists on curtseying, and expressing her pleasure and surprise at the young gentleman's considerate attentions. Possibly there was no insincerity in Mauritz's mindfulness. Boaz loaded Ruth with the measures of barley for Naomi; and it was sung of a hapless Scotch youth, that—

“ He courted the eldest with glove and with ring,
Binorie, O Binorie!
But he lo'ed the youngest aboon a' thing,
By the bonnie mill dams o' Binorie.”

Perhaps Mauritz was more delicate than deceitful, only he was unhappy in his interpreter.

There they stood, that significant group, by the booth in the Kermis of Rotterdam; and if the painter, who frittered away his talents on caricatures, had but limned them faithfully—the corpulent, comely, rejoicing father, the happy friends, the coy bride, and the modest bridegroom looking not unlike the industrious apprentice of William Hogarth—certes, they would not have needed another chronicler.

Veronica had attained her end, and she was satisfied. She was not impatient, though Herr

ritz was so long detained that her guests were
embled before the bridegroom had completed
toilette and made his entry. She did not find
t with his cravat or his cuffs, nor was she now
ressed by the imagined criticisms of Cousin
is and the commiseration of Jacqueline
scher. She went up to him sweetly as he
d alone by the cold stove and said—"Herr
ritz, I fear your coffee is cold. What biscuits
l I bring you? Are you not very tired?"

le looked down upon her with his blue eyes
ring wide and kindling, and just then his
ression changed, and he appeared once more
young man who fought the braggart Zealanders,
who took his place among the boothkeepers of
Kermis, cool, dignified, and confident, to save
her's credit and redeem another's forlorn
te. And the maiden shrank back with droop-
eyelids and flushing cheeks; but not in pain—
ange softness melted her, and a flash of new
tingled through every vein.

he company were rather formal at their enter-
ment, and indulged in perpetual refreshments.
y doubtless indulged pleasant anticipations of

the magnificent supper, the quaint pies dressed like birds, the rich game, the fresh salads, and the luscious preserves, coupled with libations that left ample room for the wish—

“ Oh ! that a Dutchman’s soul could be
Wide as the foaming Zuyder See.”

One feat was characteristic of the burly Dutch and the brusqueness of their glee. A horn so constructed as to produce a noise like thunder, was suddenly sounded by one of the guests. The ladies screamed and covered their ears, and some gentlemen engaged in conversation leapt two or three feet asunder. Herr Mauritz laughed like the rest of the men, but lounged in the back rows without volunteering a second experiment on the nerves of the circle. A merchant slightly acquainted with the envied bridegroom, suggested “that Herr Mauritz should sound the hunter’s call, as he could well do it, and that this was something worth risking one’s tympanum for.” But Herr Mauritz seemed deaf, until Veronica took it into her head that he turned his blue eyes to see whether she would second the request. She could only stammer “Will you?”

and almost before the words had passed her lips, Mauritz came forward with alacrity, and caught the horn.

The first blast Herr Mauritz blew so distanced the other that it sounded as if it would blow off the roof. He could only laugh at their trepidation. But he atoned for his barbarity, when, leaning out of the window over the Boomjees, he sent the reverberation among the yellowing poplars and over the mist-laden canal, and wound the various harmonies so richly, and with such mastery of strength and witchery of tunefulness, that if those present were not reminded of the honeycomb in Samson's dead lion, they must have been dolts indeed. The peasants, mechanics, and sailors, who with their wives and sweet-hearts were still holding the Kermis under a low moon and coloured lamps hung out among the tall masts and the swaying branches, forsook their own fiddles and tambourines, and hurried in flocks to the neighbourhood.

Veronica sat mute. It would have been hard to read the maiden's meditations. They were so profound as to prevent her joining in the applause and

thanks ; and indeed, if truth must be said, Mauritz could not have missed her voice, for he was called out again on the concerns of that unconscionable Delft widow.

When Mauritz returned, Veronica did not observe him for some time, notwithstanding his great stature. She was so occupied and agitated, that she failed even to notice her bridegroom. And yet she was not unhappy. She was carried away by the altered atmosphere of the evening, until she noticed that Mauritz had relapsed into the heavy dull boy of her first acquaintance. He had been walking up and down with Cousin Hans and sitting by Jacqueline Netscher, and his time for giving and receiving pleasure seemed over. He did not seek his bride, he did not warm up with the festivities, he merely bent his head, and left Adrian Vanstraelen to reply to the health-drinking. He drummed with his fingers on the table as if his mind wandered ; he sank his head on his breast as if he were about to drop asleep.

Think, Veronica, how slumbrous was the air of that sea-lion, buried yonder at Delft in a

hero's tomb, who nailed the broom to his mast, and swept the English Channel! Remember, too, the plain, leathern doublet still shown at the Hague, in which Father William was shot down!

Instead, Veronica protested. Jacqueline was openly satirical, and other friends followed her example with scarcely veiled innuendoes, in the way of congratulations on her promotion to the keys worn at the girdle in token of matronly rights, or condolences on her approaching departure from Rotterdam for Delft. It was too vexatious. Veronica rubbed her eyes. What could have come over Mauritz? Which of the two was the real man? Her perplexity was great. It was as if Beauty's Beast had given her some glimmering picture of a beautiful Prince, but kept her in a tantalizing uncertainty—now putting out a shapely gauntleted hand, and then a hairy paw, anon presenting a cap and feather, and again elevating a pair of furry ears.

IV.—THE MORNING IN THE STADTHAUS.

The next morning there was no room for observation on Mauritz Heemkirk, nor need to marvel at the infatuation which prompted Adrian Vanstraelen to select the apathetic Delfter for his son-in-law, as being endowed with full powers to wreath with fresh laurels the hoary house of Vanstraelen.

A common grievance, a subject of general interest, had withdrawn all attention from the couple. Nobody, not even Adrian Vanstraelen, minded them on this disturbed morning. The Kermis was in an uproar—the traders of Rotterdam were divided, the burghers of Amsterdam, Gouda, Haarlem, and Delft were furious. The burgomasters sitting in the Stadthaus had all but decided on an order which would hamper all foreign speculation in the Rotterdam Kermis. The consequences of this measure, like the suicidal consequences of all selfish measures, would in the end react on its founders, lop off the profits of the crusty or crafty Rotterdam burgomasters, and diminish their great annual fair to a mere name. Rotterdam was

half taken-in with plausible promises ; even the enlarged wariness and wisdom of men nurtured in world-wide commerce, only half doubted these. The aliens were all bristling in opposition, and almost threatening to break out in open violence.

Adrian Vanstraelen, always on the side of liberal policy and freedom, was deeply mortified at the purpose of his countrymen. A whisper of the intention had circulated without receiving much credit, but now there was no doubt the danger was imminent, and the only question now was, what steps could be taken to oppose the proclamation, which would cast disgrace on the capital, and seriously injure her dependencies.

It was a desperate case. The Council consisted of magnates with whom His Highness of Orange did not care to interfere, so that his consent was almost certain. An attempt to thwart them might be construed into resistance of their lawful authority, and visited with traders' vengeance.

Adrian Vanstraelen himself attempted an opposition, but his intervention was peremptorily and clamorously repudiated. He was regarded as all very well in a case of public charity or patriotism ;

but in an instance of mercantile prudence to be suspected of anything transcendent or quixotic, was certain death to the cause.

“I will carry the remonstrance,” said the young Delfter, and he does not even so much as suggest the question of the old Roman :—

“Who will stand on my right hand ?”

The throng of Rotterdam friends and aggrieved foreigners who burst into Adrian Vanstraelen's breakfast-room that morning, wholly overwhelming the small private concern of the bridal, stared in mingled indignation and ridicule at this interloper, this forward fellow who had the audacity to propose himself for such great responsibility as being messenger to the Stadthaus.

“My son, you are too young, you are not known yet ; you must reserve yourself for another day,” said Adrian gently, and thoughtfully scrutinising the eager face of the young man, while Veronica also gazed at him wistfully, with intent, inquiring looks.

“But, father,” pleaded Mauritz, in his anxiety *using filial privileges* for the first time, “if I am

Young, they will grant me the more license ; if I am unknown, they will bear me no grudge."

"Mauritz, I am in some measure answerable to your father for your well-being ; Herr Heemkirk will not thank me for ruining his son."

"Nay," protested the young man with increased decision, "do you think he would spare me in such a cause ? Beware, Herr Vanstraelen, lest the world say you spare yourself, your own prosperity, in my person."

What ! the world speak of the quiescence of a heedless, blunt young Delfter ! What an absurdity !

But Adrian Vanstraelen lent himself to it at last with vehemence, and said, "Well, my friends, what do you say ? will you trust my son ?" and as he spoke he clapped his hand proudly on the youth's shoulder.

What was still more wonderful, the combined band of citizens and borderers were brought to consent to accept Mauritz as their delegate. No one else was so foolhardy, or no other person possessed the negative virtues which he pointed out to them. *Dubiously, reluctantly, half-despairingly,*

and after innumerable cautions, charges, restrictions and demurs had been tendered, the haters of monopoly rose in a body, and as there was not a moment to be lost, they prepared to marshal their scapegoat—this young bell-the-cat—through the streets, it being expected that the company would gradually gather like a driven snow-ball all the way to the Stadthaus.

These men were wholly oblivious of little Veronica. Even Mauritz himself had at the moment but a dull sense of her rights. He half turned towards her, however, and looking back, whispered, "Veronica Vanstraelen will wish her father's cause success, and will forgive the faults of its advocate;" and with a grave look and a half smile he was gone.

Again Veronica had some severe thoughts of Mauritz. In her heart she accused him of stoicism and sternness. He would never make a tender husband. He might be a devoted servant of the Republic; he would no doubt be regarded as Adrian Vanstraelen's noble son, her father having doubtless chosen well for the salvation of the house of Vanstraelen. But Mauritz Heemkirk would be

oving husband to her, or he would not become husband at all. She had mistaken him last time, she had been mistaken in him all along. But Katrina had been maundering in her own way, "It is all very fine, Rika, for your father is pleased. I dare say the burgomasters will confer some honour on him. But, in my young days, a bridegroom was more taken up with his business, was consulting and courting her, in place of appearing before the Stadthaus. Why a bridegroom would no more have been called out upon public duty than they would have drawn a soldier into a house where a new-born child was cradled."

Aunt Katrina, I wonder you can be so ungrateful," protested Veronica; "think of your china jar and your tulips." She might have added, with tears in her laughing eyes, "Oh! Aunt Katrina, my wounds are paining me so that no plaster could ease the smart."

But Adrian Vanstraelen came back to his daughter, looking resolute indeed, but with a touch of sorrow, as a man whose mind is made up to a great enterprise. "I have accepted Mauritz," he said, while he looked at his daughter's flaxen hair as she bent over

her needlework ; “the party has accepted Mauritz ; the young man would not be refused. But, my child, I am sorry that the sacrifice should touch you—that you should share in any part of the sacrifice.”

“Father, this Mauritz would not be held back by me. I might as well try to restrain a lion with a silken cord ; and, you know, I would not spoil a hero,” declared Veronica, with proud reserve. “But if you would please me, pray let me walk with Peter to Marie Bergmann’s, and witness the audience in her glass.”

Adrian consented willingly. “You will see, Veronica, what a partner I have provided for you.”

Veronica looked at him keenly. “Does he reject me, father ?”

“Child, what are you thinking of ? He is a good youth, and I warrant him true as steel. But if the negotiation fails, as it may well do, he will be a sorry husband for thee. Not that I would dismiss him, never ; but notwithstanding all that he urged, I am not sure but that Herr Heemkirk will blame me very much. He is an excellent little man *himself*, but his head is always full of mountains

and shiploads of crockery. He does not see so far as Herr Mauritz, and as is but too common with the biped man, his eyes are prone to be turned downwards," groaned Adrian. "And such a tulip garden, Rika! like a rainbow; indeed, a house like a rainbow, all painted in red, lilac, yellow, and green, with box-trees centuries old cut into peacocks, whose tails rise like fans far above the summer-seats. When there I always smoked my pipe in their shade. It is a great pity!"

A vivid blush deepened on Veronica's balsamblossom cheeks, till it was almost carmine. "Will Mauritz Heemkirk suffer loss, father? Will he be censured or discarded?"

"Heaven forbid, Veronica!" exclaimed Adrian fervently, "all may turn out well. And keep you close to Peter, child, for the first days of the Kermis were nothing to what the press and tumult to get near the trial will be."

Veronica put on her great mantle and one of her aunt's caps, which towered up in the crown, and, unlike the usual skull cap, had so many puckerings and frillings drawn round the face and *gathered above the forehead*, that her features

were quite hidden. So she pushed her way by back streets, under the protecting flourish of Peter's potent cudgel, to Marie Bergmann's house, opposite the Stadthaus, before which a great multitude was already assembled.

Marie Bergmann was a poor kinswoman, supported by the Vanstraelens. She was one of those who pay the compliment of never so much as even making a profession of gratitude for friendly support. Poor Marie was infirm in mind and body. The flavour of her coffee, the pungency of her snuff, and the direction of the wind were the only things which affected her at all in a lively manner. She was so indifferent and stolid, that she did not even speculate as to how Veronica Vanstraelen found time to visit her during the Kermis, or whether she had brought her a fairing.

Veronica sat on the stool at Marie Bergmann's window, gazing into the glass, which, fastened on the shutter, affords many a Dutch woman the opportunity of scrutinising a line of shops or passengers, while she sits stitching at her embroidery-frame, weaving at her loom, or dandling her baby. Occasionally Marie, from her big chair,

sent peevish complaints about things of no interest save to herself.

Mauritz and his sponsors elbowed their way to the Stadthaus ; the latter gesticulating and haranguing, the former with his head declined and his shoulders squared, the better to help him through the crowd.

Did he guess what blue eyes were intently watching him ? Would he have cared though he had been apprised of Veronica's nearness to him ? Insensible Herr Mauritz ! apparently alive only to trade and to the interests of widows old enough to be grandmothers, as Veronica had ascertained.

Once there was some promise of a little huzza as a tribute to the young man who was carrying the people's message to the burgomasters ; but Herr Mauritz put it down with a wave of his hand. He was not a man to be gratified by acclamations, more especially as his task yet lay before him ; and so he ran rapidly up the steps to the Stadthaus, parting with his escort—respectable, grieved, almost mutinous men of Amsterdam, Gouda, Delft, and Rotterdam—on the landing-place.

Now, Veronica, shift your camera a little, and turn it fair on the great house opposite, with its rich carving and scroll-work on tower and belfry. Look beyond its balcony into the long windows wreathed with the sculptor's art, to the company seated round a heavy and most imposing table, and reverent as the signiors of Venice under their Doge. They were men who represented bursting stores, ships water-logged with their cargo-weight, plantations, cotton fields, cinnamon groves, feathery palm trees and apple-bearing pines away in the tropics; men who, if this city of the sea should sink in its own mud, could rear it again from end to end on mightier piles, and dwell once more as "on the tops of the trees," without being ruined by the outlay. They were men whose beards were white with the snows of many winters, and whose cheeks were bronzed with other climates than that of grey and foggy Holland—men in office, with massive chains and weighty seals, who maintained the dignity and discipline of Rotterdam. What hope was there that they would give ear to the young Delft trader, with only right and genius on his side, whom even a little Dutch

girl was prepared to reject as unworthy of her hand?

Mauritz was introduced into the hall. He advanced with manly strides, but without unseemly haste or perturbation, his cocked hat under his arm and his fair curls hanging down his back. Veronica saw him there, just like a little puppet three inches long, in Marie's glass; and the brave burgomasters, courteous, as all great men are till they are contradicted, leaned back and solemnly contemplated him, and evidently compared notes as to what could be the business warranting his encroaching on their valuable time and important engagements.

Mauritz stood quite alone as he began to speak. He was eyed and scrutinized by those tremendous burgomasters, each one a Geoffrey Hudson, without his lugger and pistols, but with crews ten times more numerous, a hundred times more devoted, and pens as deadly as the old settler's pistols. But there is no weakness in his air, and Veronica could have sworn there was no hesitation in his tongue.

The burgomasters are roused to his object. They *shake their locks* and growl out of their beards, and

laugh right daunting laughter. They are like Goliath, only Goliath multiplied, while David still stands solitary.

He holds on ; he will speak to the end, and will have a hearing, as he has earnestly undertaken the mission. He leans forward with his cocked hat pressed against his breast, and his blue eyes fixed on the listeners. He remonstrates, not loudly, nor in a rude braggart tone, for the burgomasters never lift a finger to their attendant officers ; but with a calm, earnest, irresistible force.

The burgomasters again lean back and permit him to finish his argument. One indeed interrupts him, but only to interrogate him and test his information. He stands the examination well, and still pursues his protest. What can resist that quiet courage ? The burgomasters look at each other ; at length one rises and signs to silence the speaker. He proposes a compromise — some vacillating, half-and-half, cowardly amendment, more fatal than the great order itself. He looks pleasantly at Mauritz, as one would pat a man on the back preparatory to administering to him an agreeable, but in some measure dangerous, dose of slow poison.

The other burgomasters, almost with one consent, fly upon the rash man as one with whom, however unwise, it is not beneath their rank to struggle. They wrangle fiercely. It is a formidable encounter—a battle of the elephants. The storm is followed by a dead calm, when the combatants begin to feel disgusted with themselves and the whole affair of the order. A leading burgomaster rises slowly and proposes, with sufficient sternness, to repeal order and counter-order until the next Kermis, until the sense of the States-General can be had on the question, as the burgomasters of Rotterdam are not wont to enact their laws in secret and with such summary despatch.

The reaction had begun ; the relief from present difficulty is received with as much acclamation as if the trouble had not been of their own making. They even smile grimly on Herr Mauritz, and wish him well, and acknowledge Delft as a good town—one of the gems included in the crown of the Seven Provinces—and then dismiss its young ambassador with many compliments.

Herr Mauritz stands with sparkling eyes and glowing cheeks in the doorway, pressing the hands

of those nearest to him. He speaks a few rapid words to the concourse without, and there arises, swelling, a roar of joy and pride and admiration for the burgomasters of Rotterdam and in glory of Herr Mauritz, the defender of the other towns in the alliance. It was such a cheer as might have caused even the mighty burgomasters' ears to tingle.

Veronica hurries home ere the streets are farther crowded, ere she is detected in the by-lanes of the town. Reaching home, she hears that the grateful friends of free trade, the citizens of Gouda, Delft, Haarlem, and Amsterdam, are to entertain her bridegroom at a banquet in that very Stadthaus which he so lately entered to crave their exemption from injury. All the world is now talking of Mauritz Heemkirk and vaunting his goodness and greatness; and not only strangers, but her old acquaintances, are curious to see Veronica Vanstraelen again and recognise her as the bride of one so highly distinguished. Adrian Vanstraelen is now a thrice happy man, but little Veronica is hardly yet a happy woman.

V.—THE NIGHT IN THE STADTHAUS—MAURITZ
AND VERONICA.

The grand old Stadthaus is rustling with trades banners and rich stuffs, and is crowded with rejoicing guests assembled in honour of Mauritz Heemkirk. Women as well as men figure in the gala: the burghers' wives and daughters in their open bodices, lace caps, and plaited hair, as well as the men in their velvet coats and jerkins, their falling collars and long cravats. Mauritz sits in the chief place, surrounded by the principal persons in the room. Adrian Vanstraelen is beside him, but Veronica is at a distance with Aunt Katrina, and the country cousins. The bride and bridegroom have changed characters—Veronica is now hanging her head and drooping her clear blue eyes, though many hearts are envying her. Jacqueline Netscher has changed her mind, and cousin Hans has shrunk into utter obscurity. Veronica is vexed with herself that she has mistaken Mauritz—been so blind, stupid, wilful, and wicked. She *knows the world is deceived*, and that she is

nothing to the young hero, Mauritz. Ah! if he had been but foiled, wronged, shamed, in place of being thus crowned with victory; if he had but wanted comfort, support, and faith in his bravery and truth; then she might have made herself something to him. But was she not selfish to think of such a thing? Perhaps Mauritz Heemkirk had no heart to bestow and had not dealt fairly with her father when he professed to meet his overtures. A shade of sadness certainly did hang about Mauritz as he sat there, the king of the hour, in the great trading city; he sighed as the glass touched his lips, and he squeezed the lemon-rind with a return of his old listless air. Was some fair maiden of Delft in Mauritz's thoughts? Was he crossed in love and sick at heart, that he grew weary in the midst of his ovation? Yet he was not the same sluggish fellow here as he might be in his chimney-corner or in a mere social gathering. He was here as a public character, and to the credit of his town he bore himself with manliness and dignity, though he said but little. His life was in his deeds, not in his words.

But some thorns were about the roses now offered to the couple at the Stadthaus banquet, as indeed there are sharp prickles about many another posy vouchsafed to fortune's favourites.

Adrian Vanstraelen, Veronica, Aunt Katrina, and Mauritz Heemkirk—all the parties interested in the treaty—were collected in the summer-house in the Vanstraelens' garden. The moment of explanation was come.

It was an early summer evening, cloudy, but with bursts of splendour. The Kermis was still sounding faintly in the far-off streets. The lulling murmur of water—the peculiar strength and serenity of these lowlands of Holland—was in the air.

Pipes and tobacco lay in the summer-house ready for Adrian and his guest; Veronica's easel, at which the little girl made many ambitious dashes after the manner of Hobbima and Cuyp, was in one corner, while Aunt Katrina's chair, in which she sat clicking her knitting-needles and dropping her ball chiefly for Mauritz to pick up, was in another. Veronica had obstinately remained without watering and tying up her car-

nations, until she was summoned authoritatively to the consultation and installed, trembling and miserable, as on the eve of the Kermis, in the companion chair to Aunt Katrina.

Mauritz was no longer the representative of the burghers or the guest of the banquet in the Stadthaus. He was a disturbed, harrassed young man, as he stood there with his hand hanging over the back of Aunt Katrina's chair, his eyes fixed on the ground at his feet. He was preparing himself to deal with what some sensitive spirits feel so hard to discuss—private interests. He did express himself distinctly, however, and was grieved to the heart to disappoint Herr Vanstraelen. He felt deeply his condescending regard, but he need scarcely state that he withdrew from the proposed alliance.

Veronica's bosom gave one great heave, and then she raised her head, pale as a lily, and as erect and still.

Adrian looked puzzled, hurt, and all but deeply offended.

"What! what!" cries Aunt Katrina in dismay, "the marriage be put off at this time of day? Impossible! Even the myrtle-crown is woven. The

fashion of the clothes, too, will change ; they cannot be stowed away like the linen. The marriage put off, when the wedding-gown is made? impossible!" Veronica was to have wedded to save the house of Vanstraelen, but now it seemed as though she must wed in order to use her wedding clothes.

"Herr Mauritz, you may have been a benefactor to the states ; but I am not the man to press my alliance on another, or to bid for a husband to my child. Yet I would fain think there is an error somewhere. Let us be frank together once more, Mauritz. Why did you deceive me?"

"I did not deceive you, mein Herr," averred the culprit sorrowfully, "unless"—and now indeed he broke down and crimsoned, and was covered with confusion—"so far as I deceived myself in the vain fancy that all might come right, that our opinions might correspond."

"And wherein did they differ?" inquired Adrian, coldly, "and wherefore did you not inform me at once that you were disinclined to the contract and dissatisfied with your prospects?"

"I disinclined ! I dissatisfied !" repeated Mauritz,

bitterly. "You must see, Herr Adrian, that I have offered no objection."

"Then there was no obstacle, Mauritz Heemkirk, no previous hindrance on your part?"

"Herr Vanstraelen, you are cruel; you compel me to explain myself and to be doubly repulsed. I was honest; I desired no more honourable father-in-law. But my mind misgave me on the road to Rotterdam; my mind misgave me utterly when I saw the Fräulein, when I was presented to Veronica and felt how far she was above me, a dull Delft trader—above me, like the flowers and the stars. I had but to confirm my impression until it was completely past doubt. Now Herr Vanstraelen, are you satisfied? After all, it is no humiliation to me; though sorrow is at the bottom of my heart. I can bear it. Father Adrian is right; I have served Rotterdam and Delft, and that should so far silence my regrets; anyway, I cannot be sorry that I came to the Kermis. No, I cannot wish the deed undone. Veronica need never fear for me; for, indeed, I had hardly one dream of success."

"Mauritz, never woman would have daunted me. The fairer she might have been, the fonder I

would have grown. I would have won her by true love; would have drawn her to me by my will, my manhood, my right to conquer her."

Mauritz lifted his head and spoke passionately—"Then you must have been free—she must have been free. There must have been no constraint on the daughter of the great Rotterdam merchant, no favour to the Delft trader."

"I cannot tell," protested Adrian, "the rather that I reckon you well matched; but I am willing to indulge your scruples and try your conditions. Away, then, with the compact; let us think no more of the two houses, or of filial duty, whatever Pastor Meulen may say of it. What say you, Mauritz—will you enter the lists? What say you, Veronica—will you authorize the candidate and dare him do his worst? The daylight is for all. The pure young girl, as yet fancy free, holds a court, which every brave, honest man of her degree—or out of it, in good sooth, if he be good and great enough—may enter and contest for her regard, till she elect her sovereign and mate."

"Ah! what say you, Veronica?" questioned Mauritz. The heavy fetters had now fallen from

the victor of the Kermis, and he turned impetuously, earnestly, towards her.

As a balsam-flower blooms on in mute acceptance of the observer's admiration and with a sort of sweet, silent assertion that it blooms for him, so Veronica sat, all outwardly bright, fair, and still, for the reason that the spirit within her was faint with bliss. She was sweetly passive, neither assenting nor denying; and who hesitates to pluck the balsam-flower? Mauritz gently, reverently, but with firm, manly hand, gathered his Veronica.

"Ha! ha!" laughs Adrian, as he strolls round his garden, smoking his meerschaum and examining his early fruits. "The betrothal and the marriage will not be a day deferred, I warrant, notwithstanding the open contest. I had forgotten myself; I was as simple as sister Katrina! I only thought that Mauritz deserved the best girl—that no good girl could resist Mauritz; and that my poor Gretchen's Rika merited a noble husband. And the house of Vanstraelen is saved, and I have prospered in my old age." And the good man forgot his disappointments, and blamed himself for having ever murmured.

The early track-boat was approaching brick-built Delft. Already the old gateways were in sight. The fine old Gothic church, famous for its peal of bells, glimmered through the trees. The Oude Kirk, with its masses of grey masonry and clusters of houses and shops within the recesses of its buttresses, crept into view. Yonder were the tombs of Father William the soldier, and Grotius the scholar, the tombs likewise of Tromp and Hein the sailors. Yonder were the avenues so perfect that they formed green bowers in the streets of the old emporium of crockery. From the track-boat's little cabin windows, with their chintz curtains and their pots of flowers, peeped a pair of lively blue eyes, which a second pair of calm blue eyes did their best to guide and instruct.

Delft had not, any more than Rotterdam, fully appreciated her young Mauritz Heemkirk. Nay, there were individuals in the town who were still well assured that though Mauritz was a wonderful young fellow at a pinch, he would be but a poor wooer, and that he would tramp home from Rotterdam Kermis to his father's chimney-corner, empty-handed and wifeless.

The track-boat was earnestly looked for that morning. Mauritz's father and mother and family were eager to welcome with all honour the wife of their beloved Mauritz. The track-boat arrived earlier than was expected by the family, so that there was great hurry and scurry, the Heemkirks being too late to meet and greet the bride. But the track-boat never comes too early for the calculating eyes of spies.

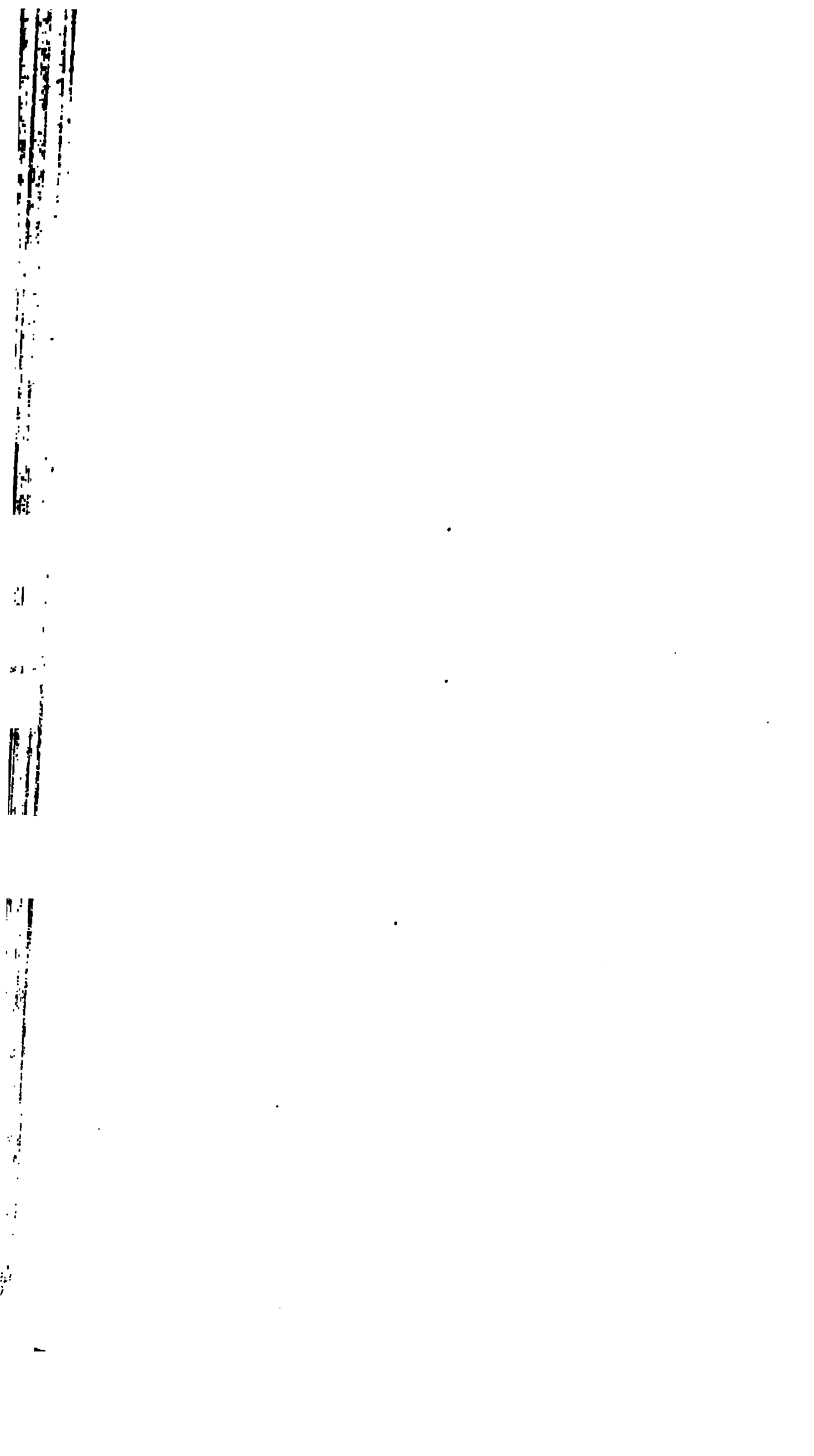
There was a mortifying impression that a hood, very different from the light head-dresses of the market women, threw itself up from behind a vast pyramid of chests and boxes on the pier. There was likewise a wicked suggestion that the little lady's inclinations had not been consulted, and that she had been dragged to enroll herself unwillingly among the dames of Delft. These gossippings were vexatious enough, but more so still the chatter about its being only like Mauritz to be so rude and inattentive as to leave his wife and lean over the boat's side to shout to one of his father's workmen. But of course they could not tell that he broke through etiquette to inquire, in the kindness of his heart, after a poor ague-stricken foreman;

and to ascertain too with pride that his dear friend, Herr Leuwenhock, whom he considered to be, like Veronica, high as flowers and stars above his plain, useful self, had already arrived at Delft, according to appointment, to share his gladness, and to paint his fair young wife for the delight of future generations.

The track-boat stopped ere Herr Mauritz, somewhat deliberate, had finished his conversation with the workman. Veronica, so far from hanging back, stole a march upon him, putting her foot on the drawbridge. But the slipperiness and the sudden change from motion to rest frightened her a little, and she looked back for Mauritz. Had the gossips been near enough, they would have heard the frank, tender voice softly crying, "Mauritz! Mauritz!" So soon had the child learned that the lion to his foes was as the lamb to his friends and his mistress. Even as it was, they were compelled to remark the fresh, blithe, balsam face, to note how nimbly Mauritz sprang across to her, and to chronicle how the pair went talking and laughing sprightly enough up the quaint trim garden to the quaint trim house in the early summer morning.


III.

WOOINGS AND WEDDINGS OF
THE LAST CENTURY.



ADAM HOME'S REPENTANCE.

I.—WILD, WITTY NELLY CARNEGIE.

“ BONNY bride's sune buskit; eh, Nanny Swinton?”

“But ye're no bonny, Miss Nelly; na, na, ye canna fill the shoon o' yer leddy mother; ye're snod, and ye may shake yer tails at the Assembly, but ye're far ahint Lady Carnegie.”

“An' I've but to dance my set with young Berwickshire Home, I care not though I bide at home after all.”

But Nelly Carnegie would have little liked that resource, though she now flung the powder out of her nut-brown hair, and tapped her little mirror with her fan.

In a low dark closet, up a steep stair, in a

narrow, confined, dark-browed house in the Canongate of Edinburgh, one of the belles of 17—made her toilette. Her chamber woman, in curch and tartan screen, was old nurse and sole domestic of the high-headed, strong-minded, stately widow of a wild north-country laird, whose son now ruled alone in the rugged family mansion among the grand, misty mountains of Lochaber. Nelly Carnegie was no beauty; not fair as a red-and-white rose, like Lady Eglinton, or any one of her six daughters; not dainty, like poor imprisoned Lady Lovat; she was more like desperate Lady Primrose, flying shrieking from her mad husband's sword and pistols, or fierce Lady Grange, swearing her bootless revenge on the wily, treacherous, scared Lord of Session. She was but wild, witty Nelly Carnegie, whom no precise, stern mother could tame, no hard life at her embroidery or her spinnet could subdue. She was brown as a gipsy, skin, eyes, and hair—the last a rich, ruddy chesnut brown—with nothing to distinguish her figure but its diminutiveness and the nimbleness of the shapely hands and feet; while her mother's lace lappets were higher by half a foot than the

Crown of many a manikin on whom she looked down, and her back that never bent or leant for a second on rail or cushion, was straight as an arrow, as well as long. But Nelly, in her absurd, magnificent brocade, and her hoop, that made her small figure like a little russet cask, and with busk and breast-knot and top-knot, was admired, as odd people will choose what is irregular, strange, and racy, in preference to what is harmonious, orderly, and insipid.

Nelly had a cavalier to walk by her sedan, as her mother and she traversed the rough streets. He handed her out at the old Assembly door, but she flung away his hand, and followed her mother alone within the dignified precincts, leaving a gloom and a storm on a lowering brow, unshaded by the cocked hat, then carried under the wearer's arm.

The old Assembly Rooms where potent Jacky Murray presided, where urbane Duncan Forbes won all hearts, where a gentle laird wooed in sweet numbers—and in vain—the Annie Laurie of that well-known old song, are now almost forgotten. Other things have passed away in company with the wigs and ruffles, the patches and snuff. The

grace may remain, and the refinement be thorough where then it was superficial, but the courtliness of conscious superiority, the picturesque contrarieties and broken natural land that lay below the heaths and craters, exist but as the black gloom and red glare of the past.

There the grave responsible Lord of Session, sober in mien as Scotchmen are wont to be, sat at midnight and roared over his claret in the mad orgies of the Hell-fire Club ; here the pawky, penetrating lawyer, shrewd both from calling and character, played the reckless game of a correspondence with the stage Court of St. Germain's ; yonder mettle beauty sailed along on her high-heeled shoes to finish the night's triumph at an oyster supper in a den behind the Luckenbooths. And there again walked an imperial dowager, who still span her own linen and struck her serving-man with her ivory cane. Truly the old Edinburgh Assembly Rooms had their secrets, and contained exciting enough elements under their formal French polish.

The regular balls at the Assembly Rooms were eras in Nelly Carnegie's life, and yet she met always *the same company*. She knew every face and name,

and what was worse, danced nightly with the same partner. The select society was constituted at the commencement of the season, and when once the individual fan was drawn from the cocked-hat of fate, there was no respite, no room for change. Young Home of Staneholme had knowledge of the filigree circle through which Nelly was wont to insert her restless fingers, and Lady Carnegie furthered his advances ; so that although Nelly hated him as she did the gloomy Nor' Loch, she received his escort to and from the Assembly Rooms, and walked with him her single minuet, as inevitably as she lilted Allan Ramsay's songs, or scalded her mouth with her morning's porridge.

Nelly's suitor was not ill to look upon so far as flesh and blood went. He was a well-made, robust fellow, whose laced coat and deep vest showed the comely, vigorous proportions of youth. The face was manly, too, in spite of its beardless one-and-twenty, but the broad eyebrows sank, either in study or sullenness, and the jaw was hard and fixed.

Yet to see how Nelly strained her bonds, how she gecked and flouted and looked above him,

and curtsied past him, and dropped his hand as if it were live coal, while the heavy brow grew darker, until it showed like a thunderstorm over the burning red of the passion-flushed cheek.

“Tak tent, Nelly,” whispered a sedate companion, sensible, cautious, and canny, whose flaxen hair over its roll had the dead greyness of age, though the face below was round and dimpled; “young Staneholme drew his sword last night on the President’s son because he speered if he had skill to tame a goshawk.”

“Tak tent yersel, Janet Erskine,” Nelly responded, wrathfully; “think twice ere you wed auld Auchtershiel.”

Janet shrank, and her light blue eye blinked uneasily, but no additional colour came into her cheek, nor did her voice shake, though it fell. “It must be, Nelly; I daurna deny my father, and mony mair drink forby Auchtershiel; and if he cursed his last wife out and in, and drove her son across the sea, they were thrawn and cankered, and he was their richtfu’ head. I’ll speak him fair, and his green haughs are a braw jointure. But, Nelly, do ye believe that the auld Laird—the auld ane

Before Auchtershiel himself, he that shot the Covenanter as he hung by the saugh over the Spinkie-water, and blasphemed when he prayed—walks at night on the burn bank ? ”

“ I dinna ken ; if I did not fear a livin’ sorrow, I would daur a dead ane,” Nelly protested, with a shade of scorn in her levity ; “ and ye can bide in the house on the soft summer nights. The Lady of Auchtershiel need not daunder by the burn side ; she can be countin’ her house purse in the still-room ; but if I were her, I would rather beg my bread.”

“ Whisht, for shame, Nelly Carnegie,” was returned with a shrillness in the measured tones, “ you would not ; and ye’ll learn yer own task, and say Yes to sour, dour Staneholme.”

“ I never will ; I’ll let myself be starved to death, I’ll throttle myself with my own hands first,” cried Nelly Carnegie, fire flashing in her large eyes and on her dark cheeks ; and looking up in her defiance she met the glow for glow of Staneholme’s stare. Timeserving Janet Erskine moved off in unconcealed trepidation, and Nelly stood her ground alone, *stamping her foot upon the boards, and*

struggling in vain against the cruel influence which she could not control, and to which she would not bend.

“He need not gloom and look at me; hearkeners never hear good of themselves,” Nelly thought, with passionate vehemence; but her sparkling eyes fell slowly, and her proud panting heart quailed with a long throb.

II. — A GALLANT REBUFFED — NELLY'S PUNISHMENT.

The next time Nelly saw Adam Home was by the landing in the Canongate, in whose shelter lay the draw-well wherein the proud, gently-born laird's daughter every afternoon dipped the Dutch porcelain jug which carried the fresh spring-water wherewith to infuse her mother's cherished, tiny cup of tea. Young Home was passing, and he stepped aside, and offered to take the little vessel from her hand, and stoop and fill it. He did this with a silent salutation and glance that, retaining its wonted downward aim, yet suddenly lightened as if it loved to rest upon the little girlish figure, in

its homely tucked-up gown, the crimson hood drawn over the chesnut hair that turned back in a crisp wave from the bold, frank, innocent face. But she waved him off, and balancing her foot upon the edge-stone, saw herself reflected in the steel-like water. Then he begged with rare softness in a voice that was rough and gruff, unless it deepened with strong feeling—

“Will you suffer me, Nelly Carnegie? I would give my hand to pluck but a flower to serve you.”

Had he tried that tone at first, before she was more than chilled by his sombre and imperious gravity, before her mother supported him unrelentingly and galled and exasperated her by persecution, he might have attracted, fascinated, conquered. As it was, she jeered at him.

“Serve me! he could do me no better service than ‘mount and go.’ A posy! it would be the stinging-nettle and dank dock if he gathered it.”

The revenge he took was rude enough, but it was not unheard of in those days. He caught her by the wrist, and under the shadow of the abutting gable he kissed the knitted brow and curling lips, holding *her the while* with a grasp so tight that it

gave her pain. When she wrung herself from him, she shook her little hand with a rage that quivered through every nerve, and had more of hate than of romping folly or momentary pique in its passion.

"Nelly Carnegie," said her mother, as she carefully pulled out the edge of a coil of yellow point-lace, which rested on her inlaid foreign work-table, and contrasted with her black mode cloak and white skinny fingers, and looking with her keen, cold, grey eyes on the rebellious daughter standing before her, went on, "I have word that Staneholme goes south in ten days."

Nelly could have said, "And welcome," but she knew the consequences, and forbore.

"He's willin' to take you with him, Nelly, and he shows his good blood when he holds that a Carnegie needs no tocher."

Still Nelly did not answer, though she started so violently that her loosely-crossed hands fell apart; and Nanny Swinton, who was about her housewifery in the cupboard off the lady's parlour, heard every word, and trembled at the pause.

"Your providing is not to buy," continued the mistress of the aristocratic family, whose atten-

dance was so scanty, and their wants so ill supplied that even in necessities they were sometimes pinched ; “ we’ve but to bid the minister and them that are allied to us in the town, and Nanny will scour the posset dish, and bring out the big Indian bowl, and heap fresh rose-leaves in the sweet-pots. You’ll wear my mother’s white brocade that she first donned when she became a Leslie, sib to Rothes—no a bit housewife of a south-country laird. She was a noble woman, and you’re but a heather lintie of a lass to come of a good kind. So God bless you, bairn ; ye’ll tak the blast of wind and gang.”

As if the benediction had loosened the arrested tongue, Nelly burst out—“ Oh, mother, mother ! no.”

Lady Carnègie, in her own person, had looked upon death with unblenching front, and had disowned her only son because, in what appeared to others a trifle, he had opposed her law. Nor did a muscle of her marked face now relax ; her occupation went on without a check ; she did not deign to show surprise or displeasure, although her voice *rose in harsh, ironical emphasis—*

“Nelly Carnegie, what’s your will?”

“Not that man, mother; not that fearsome man!” pleaded Nelly, with streaming eyes and beseeching tones, her high spirit for the moment broken, her contempt gone, only her aversion and terror urging a hearing—“The lad that’s blate and dull till he’s braggit by his fellows, and then starker than ony carle, wild like a north-country cateran; even the haill bench o’ judges would not stand to conter him.”

“He’ll need his stiff temper; I couldna thole a man but had a mind of his own, my dear,” ejaculated Lady Carnegie in unexpected, clear, cheery accents, as if her daughter’s extremity was diversion to her.

“Oh, spare me, spare me, mother,” Nelly began again.

“Hooly and fairly, Nelly Carnegie,” interrupted the mother, still lightly and mockingly, “who are you that ye should pick and choose? What better man will speer your price? or think ye that I’ve groats laid by to buy a puggy or a puss baudrons for my maiden lady?”

“I’ll work my fingers to the bone, mother; my brother Hugh will not see me want.”

“Eat bite or sup of his victuals, or mint a Carnegie’s working to me again, Nelly, and never see my face more.”

The lady had lapsed into wrath, that burned a white heat on her wrinkled brow, and was doubly formidable because expressed by no hasty word or gesture.

“Leave my presence, and learn your duty belyve, for before the turn of the moon Staneholme’s wife ye sall be.”

Do not think that Nelly Carnegie was beaten, because she uttered no further remonstrance. She did not sob, and beg and pray beyond a few minutes, but she opposed to the tyrannical mandate that disposed of her so summarily the dead weight of passive resistance. She would give no token of submission; would make no preparation: she would neither stir hand nor foot in the matter. A hundred years ago, however, the head of a family was paramount, and household discipline was wielded without mercy. Lady Carnegie acted like a sovereign: she wasted no time on arguments, threats, or entreaties. She *locked her wilful charge* into a dark sleeping-closet,

and fed her on bread and water until she should consent to her fate. Sometimes Nelly shook the door until its hinges cracked, and sometimes she flung back the prisoner's fare doled out to her; and then her mother came with a firm, slow step, and in her hard, haughty manner commanded her to cease, or she would tie her hand and foot, and pour meat and drink down her throat in spite of her. Then Nelly would lie down on the rough boards, and stretch out her hands as if to push the world from her and die in her despair. But the young life was fresh and strong within her. She panted for one breath of the breeze that blew round craggy Arthur's Seat, and one drink of St. Anthony's Well, and one look, if it were the last, of the golden sunshine, no beams of which could penetrate her high, little window. She would fain have gone again up the busy street, and watched the crowds of passengers, and listened to the bustling traffic, and greeted her friends and acquaintances. Silence and solitude, and the close air that oppressed her, were things very foreign to her nature. In the dark night, when *her* distempered imagination conjured up horrible

dreams, Nanny Swinton stole to her door, and bemoaned her bird, her lamb, whispering hoarsely, "Do her biddin', Miss Nelly; she's yer leddy mother; neither man nor God will acquit you; your burden may be lighter than ye trow." And Nelly was weary, and had sinful, mad thoughts of living to punish her enemies more by the fulfilment of their desire than by the terrors of her early death. So the next time her mother tapped on the panel with her undaunted, unwearied "Ay or no, Nelly Carnegie? Gin the bridal be not this week, I'll bid him tarry another; and gin he weary and ride awa', I'll keep ye steekit here till I'm carried out a corp before ye, and I'll leave ye my curse to be coal and candle, and sops and wine, for the lave o' yer ill days."

Nelly gasped out a husky, wailing "Ay," and her probation was at an end.

III.—A MOURNFUL MARRIAGE EVE.

There was brief space now for Nelly's buying pearlins and pinner, and sacques and mantles, and all a *young matron's* bravery, or for decorating a

guest chamber for the ceremony. But Lady Carnegie was not to be balked for trifles. Nanny Swinton stitched night and day, with salt tears from aged eyes moistening her thread ; and Nelly did not swerve from her compact, but acted mechanically with the others as she was told. With a strange pallor on the olive of her cheek, and swollen, burning lids, drooping over sunk violet lines beneath the hot eyeballs, and cold, trembling hands, she bore Staneholme's stated presence in these long, bleak March afternoons. He never addressed her particularly, although he took many a long, sore look. Few and formal then were the lover's devoirs expected or permitted.

The evening was raw and rainy ; elderly gentlemen would have needed "their lass with a lantern," to escort them from their chambers. The old city guard sputtered their Gaelic, and stamped up and down for warmth. The chairmen drank their last fee to keep out the cold—and in and out of the low doorways moved middle-aged women bare-footed, and in curch and short gown, who, when snooded maidens, had gazed on the white cockade, and the march of Prince Charlie Stewart and his

Highlandmen. Down the narrow way, in the drizzly dusk, ran a slight figure, entirely muffled up. Fleet of foot was the runner, and blindly she held her course. Twice she came in contact with intervening obstacles—water-stoups on a threshold, gay ribands fluttering from a booth. She was flying from worse than death, with dim projects of begging her way to the North, to the brother she had parted from when a child ; and ghastly suggestions, too, like lightning flashes, of seizing a knife from the first butcher's block and ending her misery.

Hasty steps were treading fast upon her track. She distinguished them with morbid acuteness through the speed of her own flight. They were mingled steps—a feeble hurrying foot-fall, and an iron tread. She threaded a group of bystanders, and, weak and helpless as she was, prepared to dive into a mirk close. Not that black opening, Nelly Carnegie, it is doomed to bear for generations a foul stain—the scene of a mystery no Scottish law-court could clear—the ' Begbie murder. But it was no seafaring man, with Cain's red right hand, that rushed after trembling, fainting Nelly Carnegie. The tender arms in which she had lain

as an infant clutched her dress ; and a kindly tongue faltered its faithful, distressed petition—

“ Come back, come back, Miss Nelly, afore the Leddy finds out ; ye hae nae refuge, an’ ye’re traced already by mair than me.”

But in a moment strong hands were upon her, holding her like a fluttering moth, or a wild panting leveret, or a bird beating its wings ; doing her no violence, however, for who would brush off the down, or tear the soft fur, or break the ruffled feathers ? She struggled so frantically that poor old Nanny interposed—

“ Na, sir ; let her be ; she’ll gae hame wi’ me, her ain born serving-woman. And oh, Staneholme, be not hard, it’s her last nicht.”

That was Nelly Carnegie’s marriage eve.

On the morrow the marriage was celebrated. The bridegroom might pass, in his manly prime and his scarlet coat, although a dowf gallant ; but who would have thought that Nelly Carnegie in the white brocade which was her grandmother’s the day that made her sib to Rothés—Nelly Carnegie who flouted at love and lovers, and sported a free, light, brave heart, would have made so

dowie a bride? The company consisted only of Lady Carnegie's starched cousins, with their husbands and their daughters, who yet hoped to out-rival Nelly with her gloomy Lauderdale laird.

The hurried ceremony excused the customary festivities. The family party could keep counsel, and preserve a discreet blindness when the ring dropped from the bride's fingers, and the wine stood untasted before her, while Lady Carnegie did the honours as if lonely age and narrow circumstances did not exist.

IV.—NELLY CARNEGIE IN HER NEW HOME.

The March sun shone clear and cold on grey Staneholme, standing on the verge of a wide moor, with the troubled German Ocean for a background, and the piping east wind rattling each casement. There was haste and hurry in Staneholme, from the Laird's mother down through her buxom merry daughters to the bare-headed servant-lasses, and the substitutes for groom and lacquey, in coarse home-spun, and honest, broad

blue bonnets. There was bustle in the little dining-room with its high windows, which the sea-foam sometimes dimmed, and its spindle-legged chairs and smoked pictures. There was blithe work in the cheerful hall, in whose broad chimney great sea-coal fires blazed—at whose humming wheels the young Mays of Staneholme, as well as its dependents, still took their morning turn. There was willing toil in the sleeping-rooms, with their black cabinets and heavy worsted curtains. And there was a thronged *mêlée* in the court formed by the outhouses, over whose walls the small-leaved ivy of the coast clustered untreasured. Staneholme's favourite horse was rubbing down; and Staneholme's dogs were airing in couples. Even the tenantry of the never-failing pigeon-house at the corner of the old garden were in turmoil, for half a score of their number had been transferred to the kitchen this morning to fill the goodly pasties which were to anticipate the black-berry tarts and sweet puddings, freezing in rich cream. But the sun had sunk behind the moor where the broom was only budding, and the last sea-mew had flown to its scaur, and the smoulder-

ing whins had leaped up into the first yellow flame of the bonfires, and the more shifting, fantastic, brilliant banners of the aurora borealis shot across the frosty sky, before the first faint shout announced that Staneholme and his lady had come home. With his wife behind him on his bay, with pistols at his saddle-bow, and "Jock" on "the long-tailed yad" at his back, with tenant retainers and veteran domestics pressing round—and ringing shouts and homely huzzas and good wishes filling the air, already heavy with the smoke of good cheer—Staneholme rode in. He lifted down an unresisting burden, took in his a damp, passive hand, and throwing over his shoulder brief, broken thanks, hurried up the flight of stairs, through the rambling, crooked passages, into the hall.

Staneholme was always a man of few words. He was taken up, as was right, with the little lady, whose habit trailed behind her, and who never raised her modest eyes. "Well-a-day! the Laïrd's bargain was of sma' buik," thought the retainers, but "Hurrah" for the fat brose and lumps of corned beef, and the ale and the whisky, with which *they were now to be regaled!*

In the hall stood Joan and Madge and Mysie, panting to see their grand Edinburgh sister. They were only hindered from running down into the yard by the deposed mistress of Staneholme, whose hair was as white as snow, and who wore no mode mantle nor furbelows nor laces, like proud Lady Carnegie. She was dressed in a warm plaiden gown and a close mob cap, with huge keys and huswife balancing each other at either pocket-hole, and her cracked voice was very sweet as she reiterated "Bide till he bring her here, my bairns," and her kindly smile was motherly to the whole world. But think you poor vanquished Nelly Carnegie's crushed heart leapt up to meet these Homes—that her eyes glanced cordially at Joan and Madge and Mysie—that her cheek was bent gratefully to receive old Lady Staneholme's caress? No, no; Nelly was too wretched to cry, but she stood there like a marble statue, and with no more feeling, or show of feeling. Was this colourless, motionless young girl, in her dusty, disarranged habit, and the feather of her hat ruffled by the wind, the gay Edinburgh beauty who had won Staneholme? What glamour of perverse fashion had she cast into his eyes!

“Wae’s me, will dule never end in this weary world? Adam lad, Adam, what doom have you dragged doon on yoursel’?” cried Lady Staneholme; and while the thoughtless, self-absorbed girls drew back in disappointment, she met her son’s proud eyes, and stepping past him, let her hand press lightly for a second on his shoulder as she took in hers Nelly’s lifeless fingers. She said simply to the bride, “You are cold and weary, my dear, and supper is served, and we’ll no bide making compliments, but you’re welcome hame to your ain gudeman’s house and folk; and so I’ll lead you to your chamber in Staneholme, and then to the table-head, your future place.” And on the way she explained first with noble humility that she did not wait for a rejoinder, because she had been deaf ever since Staneholme rode post haste from Edinburgh from the last sitting of the Parliament; and that since she was growing old, although it was pleasant to her to serve the bairns, yet she would be glad to relinquish her cares, and retire to the chimney corner to her wheel and her book; and she blessed the Lord that she *had lived to see the young mistress of Staneholme*

who would guide the household when she was at her rest. Nelly heard not, did not care to recognise that the Lady of Staneholme, in her looks, words, and actions, was beautiful with the rare beauty of a meek, quiet, loving spirit which in those troublous days had budded and bloomed and been mellowed by time and trial. Nor did Nelly pause to consider that had she chosen, she whose own mother's heart had never melted towards her, might have been nestled in that bosom as in an ark of peace.

When Lady Staneholme conducted Nelly down the wide staircase into the chill dining-room, and to the chair opposite the claret-jug of the master of the house, Nelly drew back with sullen determination.

"Na, but, my bairn, I'm blithe for you to fill my place ; Staneholme's mither may well make room for Staneholme's wife," urged the lady, gently.

But Nelly remained childishly rooted in her refusal to preside at his board, unless compelled ; and her brow, knit at the remembrance of her fall, was set to meet the further encounter. Joan

and Madge and Mysie, with their blooming cheeks, and their kissing-strings new for the occasion, stared as if their strange sister was but half endowed with mother-wit; and Lady Staneholme hesitated until Adam Home uttered his short, emphatic "As she pleases, mother," while the flush flew to his forehead, and his firm lip shook.

Staneholme had resolved never to control the wife he had forced into his arms, beyond the cold, daily intercourse which men will interchange with a deadly foe, as well as with a trusty frere; never to approach her side, nor attempt to assuage her malice nor court her frozen lips into a smile. This was his purpose, and he abode by it. He farmed his land, he hunted, and speared salmon, was rocked in his fishing-boat as far as St. Abbs, read political pamphlets, and sat late over his wine, and sometimes abetted the bold smuggling, much like his contemporaries. But no pursuit which he followed with fitful excess seemed to satisfy him as it did others, and he never sought to supplement it by courting his alien wife.

Lady Staneholme would fain have made her town-bred daughter-in-law enamoured with the

duties of a country life, and cheered the strange joylessness of her honeymoon. Failing in this attempt, she, with a covert sigh, half-pain, half-pleasure, resumed the old oversight of larder and dairy. Such care was then the delight of many an unsophisticated laird's helpmate; and, to the contented Lady of Staneholme, it had quite made up for the partial deprivation of social intercourse to which her infirmity had subjected her. Joan, Madge, and Mysie, wearied of haughty Nelly after they had grown accustomed to the grand attire she wore, denied that they had ever been dazzled with it, and ceased to believe that she had danced minuets in the Assembly Rooms before Miss Jacky Murray. They had their own company and their own stories, into which they had no temptation to drag an interloper.

Nelly, in her desolation standing apart in the centre of the wholesome, happy family circle, grew to have her peculiar habits and occupations, her self-contained life into which none of the others could penetrate.

V.—NELLY'S NEW PASTIMES.

The sea-pink and the rock saxifrage were making the rugged rocks gay, the blue-bell was nodding on the moor, and Nelly had not died, as she foolishly fancied she should. She had learned to wander out along the shore or over the trackless moor for hours and hours, and often returned footsore and exhausted. She who had been accustomed only to the Canongate and High-street of Edinburgh, the tall houses with their occasional armorial bearings, the convenient huckster shops—their irregular line intersected by the strait closes, the traffic and gossip ; or to the forsaken royal palace, and the cowslips of the King's Park—could now watch the red sunset burnishing miles on miles of waving heather, and the full moon hanging above the restless tide. She could listen to the surf in the storm, and the ripple in the calm, to the cry of the gull and the wh-r-r of the moorcock ; pull wild thyme, and pick up rose-tinted shells and perforated stones ; and watch shyly her hardy cottar servants cutting peats and tying up *flax*, and even caught snatches of their rude

Border lore of raid and foray under doughty Homes, who wore steel cap and breastplate.

The coast-line at Staneholme was high and bold, but in place of descending sheerly and precipitately to the yellow sands, it sloped in a green bank, broken by gulleys, where the long sea-grass grew in tangled tufts, interspersed with the yellow leaves of the fern, and in whose sheltered recesses Nelly Carnegie so often lingered, that she left them to future generations as "Lady Staneholme's Walks."

There she could see the London smacks and foreign luggers beating up to ride at the pier of Leith. There she could sit for hours, half-hidden, and protected from the sea blast, mechanically pulling to pieces the dried, blackened sea-weed blown up among the small, prickly blush roses. In her green quilted petticoat and spencer she might have been one of the "good people's changelings," only the hue of her cheek was more like that of a brownie of the wold; and, truly, to her remote world there was an impenetrable mystery about the young mistress of Staneholme, in her estrangement and mournfulness. Some said that

she had favoured another lover, whom Staneholme had slain in a duel or a night-brawl; some that the old Staneholmes had sold themselves to the Devil, and a curse was on their remotest descendants; for was not the young laird *fey* at times, and would not the blithe sisters pass into careworn wives and matrons?

There sat Nelly, looking at the sea, musing dreamily and drearily on Old Edinburgh, or pondering with sluggish curiosity over the Homes, and what, from casual looks and words, she could not help gathering of their history. The Lairds of Staneholme had wild moss-trooper blood in their veins, and they had vindicated it to the last generation by unsettled lives, reckless intermeddling with public affairs, and inveterate feuds with their brother lairds.

Adam Home's was a hot heart, constant in its impetuosity, buried beneath an icy crust which he strove to preserve, but which hissed and crackled when outward motives failed, or when opposition fanned the inner glow. With the elements of a despot but half-tamed, and like many another tyrant, *unchallenged* master of his surroundings,

Staneholme wielded his authority with fair result. Tenant and servant, hanger-on and sprig of the central tree, bore regard as well as fear for the young laird—all save Staneholme's whilome love and wedded wife.

Nelly did not wish to understand this repressed, ardent nature, although its developments sometimes forced themselves upon her. She had heard Staneholme hound on a refractory tyke till he shouted himself hoarse, and yet turn aside before the badger was unearthed; she had seen him climb the scaurs, and hang dizzily in mid-air over the black water, to secure the wild-fowl he had shot, and it was but carrion; and once, Joan and Madge, to whom he was wont to be indulgent in a condescending, superior way, trembled before the stamp of his foot and the kindling flash of his eye. Some affair abroad had disturbed him and he came into the hall, when his sisters' voices were raised giddily as they played off an idle, ill-thought-of jest on grave, cold Nelly. "Queans and fools," he termed them, and bade them "end their steer" so harshly, that the free, thoughtless girls did not think of pouting or crying, but

shrank back in affright. Nelly Carnegie, whom he had humbled to the dust, was below his anger.

When the grey mansion of Staneholme basked in the autumn sun, an auspicious event gladdened its chambers. Joan was matched with a gay, gallant young cousin from Teviotdale, and from the commencement of the short wooing to the indefatigable dance which the young bride herself led off right willingly, all was celebrated with smiles and blessings, and harvest-home fullness of joy and gratitude. But a dark shadow moved among the merrymakers. A young heart robbed of its rights, like an upbraiding ghost, regarded the simple, loving, trusting pair, and compared their consecrated vows with the mockery of a rite into which it had been driven.

The only change time brought to Nelly, was the progress of an unacknowledged bond between her and good old Lady Staneholme. The obstacle to any interchange of ideas and positive confidence between them, was the inducement to the tacit companionship adopted by the sick, wayward heart, with its malady of wrong and grief. Influenced

by an instinctive, inexplicable attraction, Nelly's uncertain footsteps followed Lady Staneholme, and kept pace with her soft tread, when she overlooked her spinners and knitters, gave out her linen and spices, turned over her herbs, and visited her sick and aged. There they were seen—the smiling, deaf old lady, fair in her wrinkles, and her mute, dark, sad daughter whom in patient ignorance she folded in her mantle of universal charity.

VI.—THE LAIRD CONSCIENCE-SMITTEN.

Under a pale February sun Nelly was out on the sea-braes, where the sprays of the briar-roses were swept in circles, streaming far and wide. She lingered in the hollow, and strayed to the utmost limit of her path. As she was returning, her eye fell on the folds of an object fluttering among the tedded grass. It was Staneholme's plaid. This was the first time he had intruded upon her solitary refuge. When Nelly climbed the ascent, and saw the mansion house, with its encumbered court, she could distinguish the sharp sound of a horse's hoof. Its rider was already out of sight on the

idle-road. Michael Armstrong, the laird's man, as mounting his own nag; Wat Pringle, therieve, and other farm folk, stood looking after the finished traveller; Liddel, the Tweedside retriever, paced discontentedly up and down; and old Lady Stanholme met her on the threshold, and as on the night of her arrival at Stanholme, led her up the staircase and into her sleeping chamber. Deeply marked, with dim dread, the tear-stains on the pallid cheeks of placid age, and the trembling of the feeble hand that guided her. She had nothing to fear, but what was the news for which there was such solemn preparation?

"My puir bairn," Lady Stanholme began broadly, "I've had an interview with my son, and we learnt, late, some passages in the past; and I wonder not, but I maun lament, for I am a widow mother, Nelly, and my only son Adam, who did you wrong and showed you no pity, has got his orders to serve with the soldiers in the Low countries. He has not stayed to think; he has not without one farewell: he is off and away, to wash out the sins of him and his in his young blood. *I will never see his face more: but you*

are a free woman ; and he bids you, as the last duty he will receive at your hand, read his words ?”

Nelly’s hand closed tightly over its enclosure. “Who says I told he did me wrang ?” she said, proudly, her dilated eyes lifted up to the deprecating ones that did not avoid her gaze.

“Na, na, ye never stoopit to blame him. Weary fa’ him ! Nelly Carnegie,” ejaculated honest Lady Staneholme, “although he is my ain that made you his, sair, sair against your woman’s will, and so binged up blacker guilt at his doorstane, as if the lightest heritage o’ sin werena’ hard to step ower. But, God forgive me ! It’s auld Staneholme risen up to enter afresh upon his straits, and may He send him pardon and peace in his ain time.”

“Nelly” (Staneholme’s letter said),—“for *my* Nelly you’ll never be, though the law has given me body and estate,—what garred me love you like life or death ? I’ve seen bonnier, and you’re not good like my mother, or you would have forgiven me long syne. Why did you laugh, and mock, and scorn me, when I first made up to you among

ir fine Edinburgh folks? Had you turned your
ulder upon me with still steadfastness, I might
e been driven to the wall—I would have be-
ed you. When you said that you would lie
the grave sooner than in my arms, you roused
evil temper within me; and though I had
unted the Grassmarket, I swore I would make
my wife. What call or title had you, a young
s, to thwart your lady mother and the Laird of
neholme? And when I had gone thus far—
! Nelly, pity me—there was no room to repent
urn back. I dared not leave you to dree alane
ir mother's wrath: there was less risk in your
d heart beating itself to death against the other,
t would have gladly shed its last drop for its
ative's sake. But Heaven punished me. I found,
lly, that the hand that had dealt the blow could
heal it. How could I approach you with soft
rds, that had good right to shed tears of blood for
deeds? So, as I cannot put my hand on my
ast and die like my father, I'll quit my moors
l haughs and my country; I'll cross the sea
l bear the musquetoen, and never return—
part to atone to you, for you sall have the

choice to rule with my mother in the routh and goodwill of Staneholme, or to take the fee for the dowager lands of Eweford, and dwell in state in the centre of the stone and lime, and reek, and lords and ladies of Edinburgh; in part because I can hold out no longer, nor bide another day in Tantalus, which is the book name for an ill place of fruitless longing and blighted hope. I'll no be near you in your danger, because when other wives cry for the strong, grieved faces of their gudemen, you will ban the day your een first fell upon me. Nelly Carnegie, why did my love bring no return; no ae sweet kiss; never yet a kind blink of your brown een, that ance looked at me in gay defiance, and now heavily and darkly, till they close on this world?"

Something more Staneholme raved of this undeserved, unwon love, whose possession had become an exaggerated good which he had continued to crave without word or sign, with a boy's frenzy and a man's stanchness. Nelly lost her power of will: she sat with the paper in her hand as if she had ceased to comprehend its contents—as if its release from bondage came too late.

“Dinna ye ken, Nelly woman, his presence will vex you no longer? you’re at liberty to go your own gate, and be as you have been—that was his propine,” whispered Lady Staneholme, in sorrowful perplexity, but without rousing Nelly from her stupor. They lifted her on her bed, and watched her until her trial took hold of her. No stand did Nelly make against pain and anguish. She was sinking fast into that dreamless sleep where the weary are at rest, when Lady Staneholme stood by her bed and laid an heir by her side, bidding her rejoice, in tones that fell off into a faint quavering sob of tenderness and woe; but Nelly’s crushed, stunned heart had still some hidden spring among its withered verdure, and her Benoni called her back from the land of forgetfulness.

VII.—BLESSING AND AFFLICTION—ADAM
HOME’S RETURN.

Nelly recovered, at first slowly but cheeringly, latterly with a doubt and apprehension creeping over her brightening prospect—until, all too certainly and hopelessly, her noon, that had been

disturbed with thunder-claps and dashing rain, was shrouded in grey twilight.

Nelly would live, but her limbs would never more obey her active spirit, for she had been attacked by a relentless malady. The little feet that had slid in courtly measure, and twinkled in blithe strathspeys, and wandered restlessly over moor and brae, were stretched out in leaden helplessness. When she was young, she "had girded herself and gone whither she would;" but now, ere she was old, while there was not one silver thread in those chesnut locks, "another would gird her and carry her whither she would not." And oh! to think how the young mother's heart, ready to bud and bloom anew, was doomed to drag out a protracted existence, linked to the corpse-like frame of three score and ten, until the angel of death freed it from its tabernacle of clay.

Nelly never spoke of her affliction—never parted from her baby. Travelling with difficulty, she removed to Edinburgh, to the aspiring tenement in the busy Canongate, which she had quitted in her distraction. Lady Carnegie, in her rustling silk and with her clicking ivory shuttle, received her into

her little household, but did not care to conceal that she did so on account of the aliment Staneholme had secured to his forsaken wife and heir. She did not endure the occasional sight of her daughter's infirmities without beshrewing them, as a reflection on her own dignity. She even sneered and scoffed at them, until Nanny Swinton began to fear that the judgment of God might strike her ready—a venerable grandame still without one weakness of bodily decay or human affection.

And did Nelly fret and moan over the invalid condition for which there was neither palliation nor remedy? Nay, a blessing upon her at last; she began to witness a good testimony to the original mettle and bravery of her nature. She accepted the tangible evil direct from God's hand, sighingly, submissively, and with a noble meekness of resignation. She rose above her hapless lot—the old Nelly Carnegie, though subdued and chastened, was in a degree restored.

“Nanny! Nanny Swinton!” called Nelly from her couch, as she managed to hold up, almost exultingly, the big crowing baby, in its quaintest of mantles and caps, “Staneholme's son's a

braw bairn, well worthy Lady Carnegie's coral and bells."

"'Deed is he," Nanny assented. "He'll grow up a stately man like his grandsire;" and recurring naturally to forbidden memories, she went on: "He'll be the marrow of Master Hugh. Ye dinna mind Master Hugh, Lady Staneholme?—the picture o' auld Lady Carnegie. That I sud call her auld!"

Nelly's brow contracted with something of its old indignation. "There's never a look of the Carnegies in my son; he has his father's brow and lip and hair, and you're but a gowk, Nanny Swinton!" and Nelly lay back and closed her eyes, and after a season opened them again, to tell Nanny Swinton that "she had been dreaming of a strange foreign city, full of pictures and carved woodwork, and of a high road traversing a rich plain shaded by apple and chestnut trees, and of something winding and glittering through the branches," leaving Nanny, who could not stand the sight of two magpies, or of a cuckoo, of a morning before she had broken her fast, sorely troubled to account for the vision.

The gloaming of a night in June was on the Canongate and the silent palace of the gallant, gentle King James. Lady Carnegie was gracing some rout or drum; Nanny Swinton was in her kitchen, burnishing her superannuated treasures, and crooning to herself as she worked; Nelly, in her solitary, shadowy room, lay plaiting and pinching the cambric and muslin gear whose manufacture was her daily occupation, with her child's clumsy cradle drawn within reach of her hand. Through the dim light, she distinguished a man's figure at the door. Nelly knew full well those lineaments, with their mingled fire and gloom. They did not exasperate her as they had once done; they appalled her with great shuddering; and sinking back, Nelly gasped—

“Are you dead and gone, Staneholme? Do you walk to seek my love that ye prigget for, but which canna gladden you now? Gae back to the bottom of the sea, or the bloody battle-field, and in the Lord's name rest there.”

The figure stepped nearer; and Nelly, even in her *blinding terror*, distinguished that it was no

shadowy apparition, but mortal like herself. The curdling blood rushed back to Nelly's face, flooding the colourless cheek, and firing her with a new impulse. She snatched her child from its slumber, and clasped it to her breast with her thin transparent hands.

"Have you come back to claim your son, Adam Home? But you'll have to tear him from me with your man's strength, for he's mine as well as yours; and he's my last, my only jewel."

And Nelly sat bolt upright, her rosy burden contrasting with her young, faded face, and her large eyes beginning to flame like those of a wild beast about to be robbed of its young.

"Oh no, Nelly, no," groaned Staneholme, covering his face; "I heard of your distress, and I came but to spear of your welfare." And he made a motion to withdraw.

But Nelly's heart smote her for the wrong her rash words had done him—a wayworn, conscience-smitten man—and she recalled him relentingly.

"Ye may have meant well. I bear you no ill-will; I am stricken myself. Take a look at your laddie, Adam Home, before ye gang."

He advanced when she bade him, and received the child from her arms ; but with such pause and hesitation that it might have seemed he thought more of his hands again meeting poor Nelly Carnegie's, and of her breath fanning his cheek, than of the precious load she magnanimously intrusted to him. He did look at the infant in his awkward grasp, but it was with a stifled sigh of disappointment.

“ He may be a braw bairn, Nelly—I know not—but he has no look of yours.”

“ Na, he's a Home every inch of him, my bonny boy !” Nelly assented, eagerly. After a moment she turned her head, and added peevishly, “ I'm a sick woman, and ye need not mind what I say ; I'm no fit for company. Good day ; but mind, I've forgotten and forgiven, and wish my bairn's father well.”

“ Nanny Swinton,” called Nelly to her faithful nurse, as she lay awake on her bed, deep in the sober dimness of the summer night, “ think you that Staneholme will be booted and spurred with the sun, riding through the Loudons to *Lauderdale?*”

"It's like, Lady Staneholme," answered Nanny, drowsily. "The keep o' man and beast is heavy in the town, and he'll be fain to look on his ain house, and greet the folk at home after these mony months beyond the seas. Preserve him and ilka kindly Scot from fell Popish notions rife yonder!"

"A miserable comforter are you, Nanny Swinton," muttered her mistress, as she hushed her child, and pressed her fevered lips to each tiny feature.

VIII.—THE RECONCILIATION AND RETURN TO STANEHOLME.

But Staneholme came again in broad light, the next day—the next—and the next, with half excuses and vague talk of business. Lady Carnegie did not interdict his visits, or blame his weakness and inconsistency, for they were seemly in the eyes of the world—which she honoured, after herself, although she washed her hands of the further concerns of these fools.

And Nelly talked to him with a grave friendliness, like one restored from madness or risen

from another world. "Staneholme, you've never kissed the wean, and it's an ill omen," she said, suddenly, watching him intently as he dandled the child; and as if jealous of any omission regarding it, she appeared satisfied when he complied with her fancy.

"The curtain is drawn, and the shadow is on you; but is that a scar on your brow, Staneholme, and where did you get it?"

"A clour from a French pistol;" it was but skin deep—he was off his camp-bed in a few days.

He stooped forward, as he spoke slightly, and pushed back the hair that half obscured the faint blue seam.

"Whisht!" said Nelly, reprovingly, "dinna scorn sickness; that bit stroke might have cost Lady Staneholme her son and my bairn his father;" and she bent towards him in her turn, and passed her fingers curiously and pityingly over the healed wound, ignorant how it burned and throbbed under her touch. "When the bairn is grown, and can rin his lane, Staneholme," Nelly informed him in her new-found freedom of speech, "I will send *him* for a summer to Staneholme; I'll be

lonesome without him, but Michael Armstrong will teach him to ride, and he'll stand by Lady Staneholme's knee." Staneholme expressed no gratitude for the offer, he was fastening the buckle of his beaver. The next time he came he twisted a rose in his hand, and Nelly felt that it must indeed be Beltane: she looked at the flower wistfully, and wondered "would the breezes be shaking the bear and the briar roses on the sea-braes at Staneholme, or were the grapes of southern vines bonnier than they?" He flung down the flower, and strode to her side.

"Come hame, Nelly," he prayed passionately; "byganes may be byganes now. I've deserted the campaign, I've left its honours and its dangers—and I could have liked them well—to free men, and am here to take you hame."

Nelly was thunderstruck. "Hame!" she said, at last, slowly, "where you compelled me to travel, where I gloomed on you day and night, as I vowed; I, who would not be a charge and an oppression to the farthest-off cousin that bears your name. Are you demented?"

"And this is the end," groaned Staneholme, in

bitterness ; “ I dreamt that I would win at last. I did not love you for your health and strength, or your youth and beauty. I declare to you, Nelly Carnegie, your face is fairer to me, lying lily white on your pillow there, than when it was fresh like that rose ; and when others deserted you and left you forlorn, I thought I might try again, and what kent but the ill would be blotted out for the very sake of the strong love that wrought it ? ”

A dimness came across Nelly's eyes, and a faintness over her choking heart ; but she pressed her hands upon her breast, and strove against it for the sake of her womanhood.

“ And I dreamed,” she answered slowly and tremulously, “ that it bute to be true, true love, however it had sinned, that neither slight nor hate, nor absence nor fell decay could uproot ; and that could tempt me to break my plighted word, and lay my infirmity on the man that bargained for me like gear, and that I swore—Heaven absolve me !—I would gar rue his success till his deein' day. Adam Home, what are you seekin' at my hands ? ”

“ Nae mair than you'll grant, Nelly Carnegie—

pardon and peace, and my young gudewife, the desire o' my eyes. I'll be feet to you, Nelly, as long's I'm to the fore."

"Big tramping feet, Staneholme," said Nelly, trying to jest, and pushing him back; "dinna promise ower fair. Na, Adam Home, you'll wauken the bairn!"

So Staneholme bought the grand new family coach of which the Homes had talked for the last generation; and Lady Carnegie curtsied her supercilious adieus, and hoped her son and daughter would be better keepers at home for the future. And Nanny Swinton wore her new gown and cockernonie, and blessed her bairn and her bairn's bairn, through tears that were now no more than a sunny shower, the silver mist of the past storm.

There was brooding heat on the moors and a glory on the sea when Staneholme rode by his lady's coach, within sight of home.

"There will be no great gathering to-night, Staneholme; no shots or cheers; no lunt in the blue sky; only doubt and amaze about an old man and wife: but there will be two happy hearts

that were heavy as stane before. Well-a-day! to think I should be fain to return this way!”

Staneholme laughed, and retorted something perhaps neither quite modest nor wise; but the ready tongue that had learnt so speedily to pour itself out to his greedy ears did not now scold and contradict him, but sighed—


“Ah, Adam Home, you do not have the best of it; it is sweet to be beat; I didna ken—I never guessed that.”

Gladly astounded were the retainers of Staneholme at their young laird's unannounced return, safe and sound, from the wars; but greater and more agreeable was their friendly surprise to find that his sick wife, who came back with him unstrengthened in body, was healed and hearty in spirit. Well might good old Lady Staneholme rejoice, and hush her bold grandson, for the change was not evanescent or its effects uncertain. As Staneholme drove out his ailing wife, or constructed a seat for her on the fresh moor, or looked at her stitching his frilled shirts as intently as the child's falling collars, and talked to her of his duties and *his sports*, *his wildness* was controlled and

dignified. And when he sat, the head and protector of his deaf old mother, and his little frolicksome, fearless child, and his Nelly Carnegie, whose spirit had come again, but whose body remained but a sear relic of her blooming youth, his fitful melancholy melted into the sober tenderness of a penitent, believing man, who dares not complain, but who must praise God and be thankful, so long as life's greatest boons are spared to him.

A CAST IN THE WAGGON.

I.—DULCIE'S START IN THE WAGGON, AND HER COMPANY.

LD and young were clamouring hoarsely and shrilly by daybreak one September morning round a little girl, one of a cloth-worker's numerous family. She had been rather a tender lass, and change of air was thought good for her full growth. Though she was still small, she was close on her one-and-twentieth year, and her friends held it was high time for her to see the world. It was seeing the world to go with a late mayor's daughter, an orphan and an heiress, who had been visiting the cloth-worker's family, and would have Dulcie to live with her

for a while in her neighbouring town as a friend and companion.

Mind those worthy warm-hearted relatives of Dulcie's had no idea of her returning to her parent's nest in a hurry, though the two towns, Fairfax and Redwater, were within a day's journey by waggon of each other. Dulcie would see the world, and stay in her new abode in the next country town, or lose her character for dignity and spirit; and girls were fain to be thought discreet and decided a hundred years ago or so. She might as lief marry as not, when she was away on her travels. Girls married then with far less trouble than they accomplished such a journey. They ran down to Richmond and married on a Saturday, to save a talk and a show; they walked out of the opera where Handel might be performing, and observant gentlemen took the cue, followed on their heels, and had the knot tied by a priest, waiting in the house opposite the first chair stand. Indeed, they contracted alliances so unceremoniously, that they went to Queen Caroline's or the Princesses' drawing-room, without either themselves or the world appearing quite

sure whether they were maids or wives. Dear! dear! what did come of these foolish impulsive matches? Did they fulfil the time out of mind adage, "Happy's the wooing that's not long a-doing?" or that other old proverb, "Marry in haste, and repent at leisure?" Which was the truth?

It is a pity that you should see Dulcie, for the first time, in tears. Dulcie, who only cried on great occasions, in great sorrow or great joy—not above half-a-dozen times in her life. Dulcie, whom the small-pox could not spoil, with her pretty forehead, cat's eyes, and fine chin. Does that description give you an idea of Dulcie—Dulcie Cowper, not yet Madam, but any day she liked Mistress Dulcie? It seems expressive. An undersized, slight-made girl, with a little face clearly, very clearly cut, but round in all its lines as yet; an intelligent face, an enthusiastic face, a face that could be very shrewd and practical, and, at the same time, a face that could be lavishly generous. The chief merit of her figure lay in this particular, that she "bridled" well. Yes, it is true, we have almost forgotten the old.

accomplishment of "bridling"—the head up and the chin in, with the pliant knees bent in a low curtsy. Dulcie "bridled," as she prattled, to perfection. She had light brown hair, of the tint of a squirrel's fur, and the smoothness of a mouse's coat, though it was twisted and twirled into a kind of soft willowy curls when she was in high dress. Ah! no wonder that Kit Cowper, the cloth-worker, groaned to see that bright face pass from his nine-pin alley; but it was the way of the world, or rather the will of Providence to the cloth-worker, that the child should fulfil her destiny. So Dulcie was launched on the sea of life, as far as Redwater, to push her fortune.

No wonder Dulcie was liked by Clarissa Gaga. Clarissa was two years younger than Dulcie, but she was half-a-dozen years older in knowledge of the world, and therefore fell in love with Dulcie for the sake of variety. Clarissa had the bones of a noble woman under her pedantry and affectation; she was a peg above Dulcie in station, and a vast deal before her in the world's estimation. She was indeed "a fortune;" and you err egregiously if you suppose a fortune was not properly

valued a hundred years ago. Men went mad for fair faces and glib tongues, but solidly and sensibly married fortunes, according to all the old news-prints. But Clarissa was also a beauty, far more of a regular beauty than Dulcie, with one of those inconceivably dazzling complexions that flush on like a June rose to old age, and a stately height and presence for her years. She had dark brown curls of the deep brown of mountain waters, with the ripple of the same, hanging down in a wreath of tendrils on the end of the neck behind. With all her gifts, Mistress Clary had the crowning bounty which does not always accompany so many inferior endowments: she had sense under her airs, and she was good enough to like Dulcie instinctively, and to think how nice it would be to have Dulcie with her and Mistress Cambridge in their formal brick house, with the stone coping and balcony, at Redwater. Besides, (credit to her womanhood), Clarissa did reflect what a fine thing it would be for Dulcie Cowper getting up in years, really getting up in years, however young in spirit, to have *the variety*, and the additional chance of

establishing herself in life. Certainly, Redwater was a town of more consideration than Fairfax, and had its occasional assemblies and performances of strolling players; and Clarissa, in right of her father's family, visited the vicar and the squire, and could carry Dulcie along with her, since the child's manners were quite genteel, and her clothes perfectly presentable.

It was a harmonious arrangement, in which not only Clarissa but Mistress Cambridge agreed. Cambridge was one of those worthy, useful persons, whom nobody in those strangely plain but decidedly aristocratic days—not even Clarissa and Dulcie, though they sat with her, ate with her, hugged her when they wanted to coax her—ever thought or spoke of otherwise than “Cambridge, a good sort of woman in her own way.” The only temporary drawback to the contentment of the party was the shower of tears which fell at Dulcie's forcible separation from her relatives. It was forcible in the end; all the blessings had been given in the house—don't sneer, they did her no harm, no harm, but a vast deal of good—and only the kisses and tears were finished off in the street.

After all this introduction, it is painful to describe how the company travelled. It was in a stage waggon! But they could not help it. We never stated that they were out-and-out quality; and not even all the quality could travel in four coaches and six, with twelve horsemen riding attendance, and an unpaid escort of butchers, bakers, and apothecaries, whipping and spurring part of the way for the custom. What could the poor Commons do? There were not stage coaches in every quarter of the great roads; and really if they pocketed their gentility, the huge brown waggons were of the two extinct conveyances the roomier, airier, and safer both from overturns and highwaymen. The seats were soft, the space was ample, and the three unprotected females were considered in a manner incognito, which was about as modest a style as they could travel in. Of course, they were not in their flowered silks, their lutestrings, their mantuas. We are assured every respectable woman travelled then in a habit and hat, and no more thought of hoops than of hair powder. The only *peculiarity* was that beneath their hats they wore

mob-caps, tied soberly under the chin, and red or blue handkerchiefs knotted over the hat, which gave them the air of Welsh market-women, or marvellously clean and tidy gipsies. Clarissa was spelling out the words in *Pharamond*—a French classic; Dulcie was looking disconsolately straight before her through their sole outlet, the bow at the end of the waggon, which circumscribed as pretty and fresh a circle of common and corn-field, with crimson patches of wood and the blue sky above, as one might wish to see. Occasionally the crack of a sportman's gun was heard to the right or left, followed by a pheasant or a string of partridges darting across the opening of the canvas car; but as yet no claimant had solicited the privilege and honour of sharing the waggon and the view with our fair travellers.

II.—TWO LADS SEEK A CAST IN THE WAGGON.

“Hullo, Joe! we want a lift,” cries a brisk voice, and the couple of great steeds—they might have been Flanders mares, or Clydesdale horses, so powerful were they over the shoulders, so mighty

in the flanks—almost swerved out of their direct line and their decorum. Two fellows suddenly started up from a couch where they had lain at length on a hay-stack, slid down the height, crashed over an intervening bit of waste land, and arrested the waggoner in his smock-frock and clouted shoes.

“Get in, Will, and take possession. Ha! hum! here are ladies: where will we stow our feet? I declare Will is on their skirts already, with more green slime than is carried on the breast of a pond. I believe he thinks them baggage—lay figures, as they’ve turned aside their heads. Gentlefolks for a wager! duchesses in disguise! I must make up to them, anyhow. Ladies, at your service; I humbly beg your pardon for having so much as thought of incommoding you, but indeed I was not aware of your presence. Come, Will, tumble out again instantly, and do not let us be so rude as to plague the ladies.”

Poor Will! very stiff and tired, stared about him, disturbed and discomforted, and prepared to perform the behest of his more energetic companion.

Dulcie did a little of her "bridling," but said never a word; Clarissa lifted her large, rather languishing eyes, let them fall again on her mittens, and remained dumb. They speak before they were spoken to? not they, they knew better. At the same time, when Will stumbled as he alighted on his weary feet, they were guilty of an inclination to titter, though the accident was excusable, and the point of the joke small.

"You are very polite, sirs," protested Cambridge, making round eyes, and reddening and blowing at being constituted the mouthpiece of the party on any interest save that of victuals. "I vow it is very pretty behaviour; but as it is a public carriage, I don't think we are at liberty to deprive Joe of his money, and you, sirs, of your seats. What say you, Mistress Clary?"

"I decline to give an opinion," answered Clarissa with great dignity; in which she broke down a little by adding hastily, in half audible accents, "Be quiet, Dulcie!" for Dulcie's risible faculties had been excited in a lively degree. She had been crying so lately that there was a hysterical turn in her mirth, and having once given way to it she

could not restrain herself, but was making all sorts of ridiculous faces and spasms in her throat without effect. You see, these were two ordinary, happy young girls; and the stiff starch of their manners and pretensions only brought out in a stronger light, and with a broader contrast, their youthful frolicsomeness.

“I think, sirs, you may come in—that is, if you keep your distance,” Mistress Cambridge decided, with solemn reservation. With a multitude of apologies and thanks, the two young men, more considerate and courteous in their forward and backward fashion than many a fine gentleman of the time, clambered up, and coiled themselves into corners, leaving a respectful void between them and the original occupants of the waggon.

Tranquillity settled down on the travellers—a tranquillity only broken by the drowsy rumble of the waggon-wheels, and the perennial whistle of the stooping, grizzled waggoner. Dulcie was just thinking that they might have been Turks, they were so silent, when Mistress Cambridge stirred the *still atmosphere by the inquiry—*

“Pray, sirs, have you happened to fall in with any stubble chickens in your walk; I think you said you had been walking hereabouts?” affording Clarissa an opportunity of complaining afterwards, in the retirement of the little inn’s private room, that these young fellows would judge them a set of gluttons or farmers’ daughters abroad for a holiday, aping gentlewomen, instead of being duchesses in disguise.

Although the girls never lifted their eyes, yet, by a magic only known to such philosophers, they had taken as complete an inventory of the young men, beginning at their wardrobes, as if they had looked at them coolly from head to foot for a whole half-hour. They were aware that the fellows were in plain suits, though one of them was not without the air of being fine on occasions. Their coats were cloth, not brocade or velvet; their ruffles were cambric, not lace; their shoe-buckles were only silver; their hats were trimmed with braid, and neither with gold nor silver edging. They were not my lords; they were not in regimentals; they did not rap out oaths; they had not *the* university air; they showed no parson’s bands;

they were not plain country bumpkins—what were they?

After all, it was scarcely worth inquiry whether the new-comers belonged to law or physic; for the young women in their pride and petulance felt bound not to consider the investigation worth the trouble. The lad who was the leader, and who was unquestionably of gentle enough nurture, was a plain little fellow, sallow and homely-featured, although a good-natured person might suppose from his smiling sagacity that in animated conversation it would be quite possible to forget his face in his countenance. The other was ruddy, with a face as sharply cut as a girl's, and delicate features not fitting his long limbs—clearly he was no better than a nincompoop. Yes, the girls were perfectly justifiable in whispering as the waggon stopped to bait at the "Nine Miles House," and they got out to bait also—

"What a pair!"

"Such a fright, the little fellow, Clary!"

"Such a goose, the tall fellow, Dulcie!"

It is a sad truth that foolish young women will

judge by the exterior, leap at conclusions, and be guilty of rude and cruel remarks.

What would come of it if the silly, sensitive hearts were in earnest, or if they did not reserve to themselves the indefeasible right of changing their opinions?

At the "Nine Miles House" the wayfarers rested, either in the sanded parlour, or the common kitchen of the ale-house. Mistress Clarissa and her party had the sanded parlour for themselves; the young men, with their cramped legs, stumbled into the fitch-hung kitchen, the more entertaining room of the two, and had plates of beans and bacon, a toast and a tankard; for the day was in September, and the wind was already bracing both to body and appetite. Mistress Clarissa carried her private stores, and Cambridge laid out her slices of roasts and broils, plates of buns and comfits, and cruets with white wines. But when did a heroine remain in a sanded parlour in an inn, when she could stroll over the country and lose her way, and get run at by wild cattle, and stared at by naughty gentlemen? Clary was not so mean-spirited, though she was physically lazier

than Dulcie; she was eager to scamper across the stubble fields (where Cambridge expected chickens to roam in flocks), and to wander, book in hand, by yon brook with the bewitching pollards.

Dulcie could not accompany her. Dulcie being a practical woman, a needle in innocent sharpness, had peeped about the waggon to inspect their luggage, and had found to her horror that one of her boxes had burst its fastenings—that very box with her respected mother's watered tabby, and her one lace head on the place of honour on the top. So she and Cambridge had an earnest consultation on the accident, which resulted in their proceeding to tuck up their skirts, empty the receptacle with the greatest care and tenderness, and repack it with such skill that a rope would replace its rent hinges. Dulcie was not for walking.

Clarissa was thus forced to saunter alone, and after she had got to the brook and the pollards, she sat down, and leant her arms on the bars of an old farm gate. Soon tiring of looking about her, staring at the minnows and the late orange *coltsfoot* and white wild *ranunculus*, and the straw-

coloured willow leaves dropping into the water, she took out of her pocket that little brown French classic, *Pharamond*, and started again to accompany the French story-teller, advancing on the very tallest of stilts that story-teller ever mounted. It was a wonder truly that Clary on her mossy bank, and by her rustic stile, had not preferred the voices of the winds and the waters, the last boom of the beetle, the last screech of the martin, the last loud laugh of the field-workers borne over a hedge or two on the breeze, to the click and patter of these absurd Frenchmen's tongues.

At last Clarissa bethought her of the hour, sprang up, carefully put away her volume—volumes and verses were precious then—and began to pick her steps homewards. Ah! there had been a wretch of a man looking at her—actually drawing her in his portfolio—the ugly fellow in the waggon. Thank goodness he could not have recognised her as his fellow-traveller; he had copied the old farm-gate from the other side, and he could only have got a glimpse of her figure through the bars with not so much as the crown of her hat above them. He had only put her in

faithfully by a line or two, and three dots, and he did not observe her now as she passed behind him and scanned his performance ere she scampered off. But what a risk she had run of having her likeness taken without her knowledge or consent, and carried about the country by a walking gentleman!

It was quite an adventure ; yet how could Clary think it so when an earthquake and a whole town burnt to ashes were nothing in her French novels. But, still true to the instinct of personality which causes us to think a mole-hill in reference to our dear selves a world more momentous and interesting than a mountain in reference to a princess of the blood-royal, stately Clarissa flew off like a lapwing to tell Dulcie that she had just had such an escape, and hit on such a discovery—she had found out all about the two fellows ; they were a couple of painters. Marry ! it was a marvel to see the one so hearty, and the other so rosy. Doubtless they did not have an odd penny in their purse between them.

Clarissa came too late ; she encountered Dulcie *running out to meet her*, all alive with the same

news, only gathered in a more orthodox manner. The fair, soft lad, whom they had reckoned a nincompoop, had shaken himself up in his companion's absence, and had offered his landlady a drawing for his share of the dinner, "if you will score the value off the bill." And the landlady had repeated the story to Cambridge and Dulcie when she showed the picture to them, and expressed her conviction that the lad was far gone in the spleen—he seemed always in a brown study; too quiet-like for a lad. She should have no peace in her mind about him if she were in any way related to him. Bless her heart! he would sell another for something much less than a crown.

Dulcie, all in a glow, had actually been chaffering with the painter for one of those wonderful groups of luscious peaches, mellow pears, July flowers, and striped balsamine, singing birds and fluttering insects, full of extravagant beauty. In the business, too, Dulcie had been by far the more overcome of the two. The painter, roused to a job, had not cheated her; on the contrary, he had been as usual a conscientious spendthrift of his powers. He had conducted the negotiation in the plainest,

manliest spirit, looking the eager girl in the face with his blue eyes, and receiving her crown-piece in his hand, which was nobler than his face, inasmuch as it was seamed with the action of his paints and tools, without a notion of anything unbecoming or degrading.

The brother painter shook his head when he returned, and found what Will had been about in his absence.

“Man, man, didn’t I bargain that I was to pay for your company, and haven’t I put you in the worst bed, and allowed you the burnt meat and the sodden bread, and the valise to carry twice as often as I took it myself, to satisfy your plaguy scruples? And yet you could go and scurvily steal a march upon me the moment you were out of my sight! But,” brightening immeasurably, and bowing low, “you have certainly contrived what I had not the face to attempt—an introduction to the ladies—although, no doubt, it was very simply done, and you are a very modest man, as I do not need to tell them. Ladies, I am Sam Winnington, son of the late gallant Captain Winnington, though I should *not call him* so ; and this is Will Locke,

the vagrant child of an excellent man, engaged, I believe, in the bookselling and stationery trade. We are painters, if it please you, on a tour in search of sketches and commissions. I beg to assure you, that I do portraits on a great scale as well as a small, and Will sometimes does lions in the jungle, as well as larks in a tuft of grass."

Cambridge was more posed than ever by the fresh advance included in this merry speech; but the girls were quite of another mind, and took the matter forthwith into their own hands, as is usual with the class, and bore down caution and experience, particularly when it proceeded from their housekeeper. They liked the young man's congenial sense and spirit, they secretly hankered after his vivacity; they were, with their dear woman's romance, all afire in three minutes about pictures, gods and goddesses, historic scenes, and even scratches in Indian ink. A true woman and a painter are hand and glove at a moment's warning in any age. Cambridge could but drop naturally into the background, and regard the constant puzzle, "How girls can talk with fellows!"

The chance companions were once more packed into the waggon, pleasantly mixed together this time, and away they trundled yet many weary miles by the sunset and the light of the moon. The boughs in the horses' collars dangled brown, Cambridge and the waggoner nodded drowsily; but, divine privilege of youth! the spirits of the lads and lasses only freshened as the long day waned and they neared the goal. They were *dramatis personæ* on a moving stage, jesting like country folks going to a fair. Even Will Locke was roused and lively as he answered Dulcie's pertinacious, pertinent questions about the animal and vegetable life he loved so well; while Dulcie, furtively remembering the landlady's suggestion, wondered, kind heart! if she could use the freedom to mention to him that ground ivy was all but infallible in early stages of the spleen, and that turnip broth might be relied on to check every incipient cough. Clarissa was coquettish, Sam Winnington was gallant. With all the girls' mock heroism, and all their arrogance and precision, trust me, girls and lads formed a free and friendly company *in the end*.

III.—REDWATER HOSPITALITY.

Clarissa and Dulcie did do the young men service in their calling. They said it would be a shame not to help two such likely fellows (you know they had undauntedly set the one down as a fright and the other as a goose in the morning); they were sure they were industrious and worthy, and they would give bail for their honesty. So they spoke right and left to the few influential families who were at Redwater of the two young painters, who by mere luck had come with them in the waggon, had put up at the "Rod and Fly," and were waiting for commissions. Had the Warrens or the Lorimers not heard of them? They would come bound they were a couple of geniuses, from their conversation.

The old world grinned, and said to the girls' faces that the lasses had better not be too zealous for the lads; they were generally fit to manage their own business, and something more into the bargain. Uncle Barnet would not care to have his niece Clary fling herself away with

her tidy fortune on a walking gentleman, though he were a genius.

The result was that Dulcie "bridled" in a twitter of wounded faith and anger. Clarissa was superb and scornful. She ordered a full-length portrait, and fixed the hour for the sitting within the week. Dulcie set off alone with Master Will Locke—Dulcie, who knew no more of Redwater than he should have done, if his wits had not been woolgathering—to find the meadow which was beginning to purple over with the meadow saffron.

But for all the townspeople laughed at Mistress Clary's and Mistress Dulcie's flights, they never dreamt of them as unbecoming or containing a bit of harm. Fine girls like Clary and Dulcie, especially an accomplished girl like Clary, who could read French and do japan, besides working to a wish in cross-stitch and tent-sketch, were not persons to be slighted. The inhabitants saw for themselves that the painters had coats which were not out at elbows, and tongues, one of which was always wagging, and the other generally at rest, but *which* never said a word fairly out of joint.

They needed no further introduction ; the gentlemen called for the young men, the ladies curtsied to them in the bar of the Rod and Fly, in the church-porch, in the common shop, and began conversations with them while they were chaffering at the same counter for the same red ribbons to tie up the men and the women's hair alike ; and they felt that their manners were vastly polite and gracious, an opinion which was not far from the truth.

The Vicar lent the painters books. The Mayor invited them to supper. The nearest Justice, who was a family man, with a notable wife, had them to a domestic party, where they heard a little girl repeat a fable, and saw the little coach which the Justice had presented to his son and heir, then in long clothes, in which he was to be drawn along the smooth oak-boarded passages of the paternal mansion as soon as he could sit upright.

Lastly, Clarissa Gage, under the sufficient guardianship of Cambridge, treated the strangers to a real piece of sport—a hop on the washing-green, under her mulberry-tree. It commenced at four o'clock in the afternoon, and ended with dusk and

the bats, and a gipsy fire, and roasting groats and potatoes in the hot ashes, in imitation of the freakish oyster suppers which Clary had attended in town.

Clary took care to have her six couples well assorted, and not to be severed till the merry-making was over; she did not mind uniting herself to Master Sam Winnington, and Dulcie to Master Will Locke—mind! the arrangement was a courteous compliment to the chief guests, and it gave continual point to the entertainment. The company took a hilarious pleasure in associating the four two-and-two, and commented openly on the distribution: “Mistress Clary is mighty condescending to this jackanapes.” “Mistress Dulcie and t’other form a genteel pair.”

To be sure the two young men heard the remarks, which they might have taken as broad hints, and the girls heard them too, uttered as they were without disguise; but so healthy were our ancestors, that nobody was put out—not even soft, mooning Will Locke. Nothing came of it that evening, unless a way Dulcie had of pressing her *red lips together, throwing back her little brown*

head, shaking out the powder from her curls, and shaking down the curls themselves, with a gleeful laugh, which appeared to turn her own "bridling" into derision ; and a high assertion of Clary's that she was determined never to wed a man beneath the rank of a county member or a peer. Now, really, after Clary had danced fifteen dances, and was about to dance other five, without stopping, with a portrait painter, of her own free will, this was drawing a longish and very unnecessary bow. But then Sam Winnington did not take it amiss or contradict her. He said she was right, and he had no doubt she would keep her word, and there was a quick, half-comic, half-serious gleam from the depths of his grey eyes which made Clarissa Gage look more bashful and lovelier than any man had ever yet beheld her. Pity the member or the peer could not have been that man !

Imagine the party after Mistress Cambridge had provided them with some of her favourite chickens, and more substantial Dutch beef, with wet fruit and dry, cold Rhenish and sugar, and mulled wine against the dew and damp feet, collecting merrily round the smoky fire, with little jets of

flame shooting up and flashing out on the six couples! Sam Winnington in his silk stockings and points neatly trussed at the knee, was on all fours poking the blue and red potatoes into the glowing holes. Another man with rough waggishness suddenly stirred the fire with an oak branch, and sent a shower of sparks like rockets into the dark blue sky, but so near that it caused the women to recoil, screaming and hiding their faces on convenient shoulders, and lodged half-a-dozen instruments of ignition and combustion in Sam Winnington's hair, singeing it and scorching his ears. Had Sam not been the best-natured and most politic fellow in the world, he would have dragged the aggressor by the collar or the cuff over the smoking, crackling wood, and made the ladies shriek in greater earnest.

There was the strange ruddy light now on this face, now on that—on Will Locke's as he overturned a shovel of groats at Dulcie's feet, and on Dulcie's, so eager to cover his blunder, that she quite forgot the circumstances of the case, and never came to herself till she had burnt all *the five tips of her rosy fingers* catching the

millers' pearls. Then Will Locke was so sorry, stroked the fingers so daintily, hung upon Cambridge so beseechingly, imploring her to prepare a cool mash for Mistress Dulcie's finger points, the moment they were all gone—that Dulcie could have cried for his tenderness of heart, and quickness and keenness of remorse.

Conjure up the whole fourteen—the Vicar and Cambridge of the number—when the fire had sunk white in ashes, when they could scarcely see each other's faces, and only guess each other's garments, having a round at "Puss in the corner," running here and rushing there, seizing this shoulder-knot, holding tight like a child by that skirt, drawing up, pulling back, whirling round all blowsy, all panting, all faint with fun and laughter, and the roguish familiarity which yet thought no evil. Very romping, was it not? very hoydenish? yes, certainly. Very improper? by no means. It was practised by dignitaries of the Church, still more classic than the Vicar scuttling and ducking after Cambridge (you never saw the like), and by the pink and pride of English womanhood.

Redwater was hospitable to these painter lads,

as we understand hospitality, unquestioningly, ungrudgingly hospitable; but it was more than hospitable to them, it was profitable to them in a pecuniary sense, without which great test of its merits they could not long have tarried within its bounds. They were neither fools nor hypocrites to pretend to be clean indifferent to the main chance.

The Vicar fancied a likeness of himself in his surplice, which his parishioners might buy and engrave, if they had a mind to preserve his lineaments when he was no longer among them. The Justice took a notion to have his big girls and his little girls, his boy and nurse, his wife, and himself as the sheltering stem of the whole young growth, in one canvas.

But the great achievement was Sam Winnington's picture of Clarissa, "not as a crazy Kate this time," she told him saucily, "but myself in my hair and brocade, to show what a grand lady I can be." Thus Clarissa dressed herself out in one of those magnificent toilettes all in the autumn mornings, and sat there in state for hours, for the sole *benefit of posterity*, unless Sam Winnington was

to reap a passing advantage by the process. Clarissa in her brocade, with the stiff body and the skirt standing on end, her neckerchief drawn through the straps of her boddice, her bouquet pinned "French fashion" on her side ; surely that picture was a masterpiece. So speaking was the copy of her deep brown hair, her soft, proud cheek, the wave of her ripe red lips, that a tame white pigeon, accustomed to sit on her shoulder, flew into the window right at the canvas, and, striking against the hard, flat surface, fell fluttering and cooing in consternation to the ground. If that was not an acknowledgment of the limner's fidelity, what could be ?

Clary, in person, played my lady very well, reclining in her father's great chair. Her hall was roomy enough ; it had its space for Sam Winnington's easel as well as Clary's harpsichord, and, what was more useful, her spinning-wheel, besides closets and cupboards without number. Sam Winnington entertained Clarissa ; he was famous in years to come for keeping his sitters in good humour. He told her of the academy and the president's parties, of the public gardens and the wild

beast shows ; and how the Princesses had their trains borne as they crossed the park. He asked her what quality in herself she valued the most ; and owned that he was hugely indebted to his coolness. When his colours were not drying fast enough, he read her a page or two of grand heroic reading from Pope's *Homer* about Agamemnon and Achilles, Helen and Andromache ; when she tired of that he was back again to the sparkling gossip of the town, for he was a brilliant fellow, with a clear intellect and a fine taste ; and he had stored up and arranged elegantly on the shelves of his memory all the knowledge that was current, and a little more besides.

When he was gone, Clary would meditate what powers of conversation he had, and consider rather glumly how she would miss the portrait painter when he migrated to his native air, the town ; how dull Redwater would be ; how another face would soon supplant hers on his canvas ! He had shown her others in his portfolio quite as blooming and dignified, though he had tumbled them carelessly over ; and so he would treat hers when another's was fresh *before him*. Clary would be restless and

cross at her own suppositions : for where is the use of being a beauty and a wit if one must submit to be either forgotten or beaten, even by a portrait painter ?

In the meantime, the Vicar also wanted a *fac-simile* of his hay-field, as it looked when the haymakers were among the tedded grass, or under the Redwater ash-trees, to present him with a pleasant spectacle within, now that the bleak autumn was coming on, and there would be nothing without but soaked or battered ground, dark skies, muddy or snowy ways. The Mayor desired a pig-sty, with the most charming litter of little black and white pigs, as nice as guinea-pigs, and their considerably coarser grunting mamma, done to hand. He was a jolly, prosaic man, Master Mayor, very proud of his prosaicism, as you rarely see a real man of his poetry : he maintained, though Mrs. Mayor nearly swooned at the idea, that he would sooner have a pig-sty than a batch of heroes. Perhaps the heroes of Master Mayor's day had sometimes wallowed in the mire to suggest the comparison. And Clarissa Gage would have her bower done—her

clematis bower before the leaves were brown and shrivelled, and there only remained the loving spindle-shanked stems clinging faithfully to the half-rotten framework which they could no longer clothe with verdure.

What a bower Will Locke made of Clary's bower! as unique as Sam Winnington's portrait of Clary herself. It was not the literal bower; it would not have suited Master Mayor or the Justice, though it might have had a charm for the Vicar. We will go with the Vicar; although he also had his bombast, and, when elevated by company and cheer, denominated Cambridge a goddess, and raised in the poor woman's breast expectations never to be realized. We don't altogether approve, but we like that wonderful bit of work. There never were such deep damask roses as hung over the trellis, there never were such flaming sun-flowers, or pure white lilies as looked in at the sides. Squirrels don't frequent garden bowers unless they are tamed and chained by the leg. Our robin redbreasts are in the fields in summer, and do not perch on boughs opposite speckled thrushes *when they* can get abundance of worms

and flies among the barley. We have not little green lizards at large in England ; the only one ever seen at Redwater was in the apothecary's bottle. Still what a bower that is ! What a blushing, fluttering bower, trilling with song, glancing and glowing with the bronze mail of beetles and the softened glory of purple emperors ! What a thing it was to examine ; how you could look in and discover afresh, and dwell for five minutes at a time on that hollow petal of a flower steeped in honey, on that mote of a ladybird crawling to its couch of olive moss.

Dulcie was speechless with admiration before this vision of Clarissa's bower. Heigho ! it was an enchanted bower to Dulcie as it was to Will Locke. It was veritably alive to him, and he could tell her the secrets of that life. What perfume the rose was shedding—he smelt it about his palette ; what hour of the clock the half-closed sun-flower was striking ; whence the robin and the thrush had come, and what bean fields they had flown over, and what cottage doors they had passed ; of what the lizard was dreaming in south or east as he turned over on his slimy side—all were plain to him.

Ostensibly Dulcie was taking lessons from Will Locke in flower-painting, for Dulcie had a delicate hand and a just eye for colours, and the sweetest, natural fondness for this simple, common, beautiful world. And Will Locke was a patient, indulgent teacher. He was the queerest mixture of gentleness and stubbornness, shyness and confidence, reserve and candour. He claimed little from other people, he exacted a great deal from himself. He was the most retiring lad in society, backward and out of place ; he was free with Dulcie as a girl of her own stamp could be. He had the most unhesitating faith in his own ability, he relied on it as on an inspiration, he talked of it to Dulcie, he impressed it upon her until he infected her with his own credulity, until she believed him to be one of the greatest painters under the sun. She credited his strangest imagination, and that quiet lad had the fancy of a prince of dreamers.

In the end Dulcie was humble and almost awed in Will Locke's presence. Now here comes the sign of Dulcie's innate beauty of character. Had Dulcie been a commonplace, coarse girl, she would have been wearied, aggrieved, fairly disgusted by

Will Locke in three days. But Dulcie was brimful of reverence, she was generous to the ends of her hair, she liked to feel her heart in her mouth with admiration.

The truth of the matter was, Dulcie would have been fain to lift up Will Locke's pencil as they pretend Cæsar served Titian, to clean his palette, gather flowers for him, busk them into a nosegay, preserve them in pure water, and never steal the meanest for her own use. Will Locke was her saint, Dulcie was quite ready to be absorbed in his beams. Well for her if they did not scorch her, poor little moth!

Oh! Dulcie, Dulcie, your friends could not have thought it of you—not even Clary, tolerably misled on her own account, would have believed you serious in your enamourment, though you had gone down on your knees and sworn it to them. It was nothing but the obliging humour of Mistress Dulcie and the single-heartedness of the youth; still even in this mild view of the case, if their friends had paid proper attention to them, they would have counselled Dulcie to abide more securely by her chair covers, and my simple man

to stick more closely to his card or his ivory, his hedges or his hurdles.

Sometimes, late as the season was, Will Locke and Dulcie went out picking their steps in search of plants and animals, and it was fortunate for Dulcie that she could pull her mohair gown through her pocket-holes, and tuck her mob-cab under her chin beneath her hat, for occasionally the boisterous wind lifted that trifling appendage right into the air, and deposited it over a wall or a fence, and Will Locke was not half so quick as Dulcie in tracing the region of its flight, neither was he so active, however willing, in recovering the truant. Why, Dulcie found his own hat for him, and put it on his head to boot one day. He had deposited it on a stone, that he might the better look in the face a dripping rock, shaded with plumes of fern and tufts of grass, and formed into mosaic by tiny sprays of geranium faded into crimson and gold. It was a characteristic of Will that while he was so fanciful in his interpretation, the smallest, commonest text sufficed him. The strolls of these short autumn days were never barren of *interest and advantage* to him. The man car-

ried his treasures within himself; he only needed the slightest touch-stone from the outside world to draw them out. A field-mouse's nest was nearly as good to him as an eagle's eyrie, an ox-eyed daisy as a white rose, a red hemp nettle as a fox-glove. He put down his hat and stood contemplating the bit of rock, until every morsel of leaf told him its tale, and then proceeded to fill his pockets and hands with what the poorest country boy would have deemed the veriest weeds; and at last he would have faced round, and marched home, unconscious that his fair hair, bleached like a child's, was undefended from a pitiless shower impending over his head. Dulcie lingered dutifully behind, picked up that three-cornered hat timidly, called his attention to his negligence, and while he stooped with the greatest ease in life, she, bashfully turning her eyes another way, finally clapped the covering on his crown, as a mother bonnets her child.

IV.—OTHER CASTS FOLLOWING THE CAST IN
THE WAGGON.

Clary and Dulcie were slightly censured for their officiousness in the affairs of these painter fellows: but it is in the nature of women not to take well with contradiction: it is in the nature of good women to fly furiously in the face of whatever crosses their generosity, or thwarts their magnanimity.

The crisis came about in this way: Will Locke had finished his work long before Sam; not that Will was more industrious, but he had not got half the commissions at only half the price, and that was about the usual division of labour between them. The two men were born to it. Sam's art took the lucrative shape of portrait-painting; Will's, the side of flower and fruit and landscape painting, which was vilely unremunerative then, and allegorical painting, which no one will be at the pains to understand, or, what is more to the purpose, to buy, in this enlightened nineteenth century. Sam, who *was thriving already*, fell in love with Clarissa

Gage, with her six thousand pounds fortune: there was no premeditation, or expediency, or cunning, in the matter; it was the luck of the man. But Will Locke could never have done it: he, who could never make a clear subsistence for himself, must attach himself to a penniless, cheery, quick little girl like Dulcie; and where he could not well maintain one, must provide for two at the lowest estimate. Will Locke was going, and there was no talk of his return; Dulcie was helping him to put up his sketches with her orderly, ready, and respectful hands.

“When we are parted for good, I shall miss you,” he said, simply.

Her tender heart throbbed with gratitude, but she only answered—

“Are we to be parted for good? Will you never come back to Redwater?”

“I cannot come back like Sam,” he affirmed, sadly, not bitterly; “I am not a rising man, Dulcie, though I may paint for future ages.”

A bright thought struck Dulcie, softening and warming her girlish face, till it was like one of those faces which look out of Fra Angelico's pic-

ures, and express what we are fond of talking about—adoration and beneficence: “Could I paint for the potteries, Master Locke?” For, in his noble thriftless way, he had initiated her into some of the very secrets of his tinting, and Dulcie was made bold by the feats she had achieved.

“What should set you labouring on paltry porringers?—you are provided with your bit and sup, Mistress Dulcie.”

“I thought it might be fine to help a great painter like you,” confessed the gentle lass; very gently, with reluctance and pain, for it was wrung by compulsion from her maidenliness.

“Do you think so? I love you for thinking it,” he said directly: but he would never have done so, brave as he was in his fantasies, without her drawing him on.

However, after that speech, there was no further talk of their parting for good: indeed, Dulcie would do her part, and slave at these “mugs and pigs” to any extent; and all for a look at his painting before he quitted the easel of nights; a walk, *hanging upon his arm*, up Primrose Hill;

a scat by his side on the Sundays in the city church where he worshipped. Dulcie did not care to trouble her friends at home with the matter: instead, she had a proud vision of surprising them with a sight of—her husband. “They would be for waiting till they could spare money to buy me more clothes, or perhaps a chest of drawers; they could not afford it: no more could Will find means to fly up and down the country. Father dear will be pleased to see him so temperate: he cannot drink more than a glass of orange-wine, or a sip of cherry-brandy; he says it makes his head ache: he prefers the clear, cold water, or at most a dish of chocolate. Mother may jeer at him as unmanly; she has a fine spirit, mother, and she may think I might have done better; but mother has grown a little mercenary, and forgotten that she was once young herself, and would have liked to have served a great genius with such a loving heart and such blue eyes as Will’s. Ah! the girls will all envy me, when they get a glance from Will’s blue eyes: and let them, for he is too good a fellow to look at anybody but his poor ordinary silly wife, and if he *did*, the odds are that he would not see them;

ould not tell whether their hair were black or red. Ah me! I am not sure whether Will always sees me—poor me—and not one of his angels from paradise.”

But Dulcie did mean to tell Clary, and to ask her what she would advise her to wear for her wedding-gown, and whether she and Sam Winnington would be best maid and best man. But Clary put her foot through the plan neatly. Clary was in one of her vapourish moods when she inquired one night, “Is Will Locke coming down again, Dulcie? Oh! what ever is he seeking here? What more can we do for him? Nobody wants any more sheep or goats (were they sheep or goats, Dulcie?), or strawberries or currants, unless as mutton, and kid, and preserves. And, Dulcie, you must not stand in your own light, girl, and throw away any more notice upon him; it is wasting your time, and the word of him may keep away others. A match with him would be purely preposterous; even Sam Winnington, who is a great deal more of a scamp, my dear, treats him as a sublime simpleton.”

What induced Clary to attempt to lock the

stable after the steed was stolen? What drove her off all of a sudden on this dreadfully candid and prudent tack? She only knew. Possibly it was to ease her own troubled conscience; but with Sam Winnington constantly dangling about her skirts, and receiving sufficient encouragement, too, it was hard for Dulcie to bear. She was in a fine passion; she would not tell Clary, after that round of advice; no, not a word. How did she know what Clary would do next? Perhaps forbid Will the house, when he came back from London with the licence, lock her into a room, and write an evil report to her friends? No, Dulcie could keep her own counsel: she was sorry to live in Clary's house, and eat the bread of deceit, but she would not risk Will's happiness as well as her own.

Will Locke reappeared on the scene within a fortnight. The lad did not tell Dulcie, though, that he had walked the most of the way, and that he had rendered himself footsore, in order to be able to count out Dulcie's modest expenses up to town, and perhaps a month's housekeeping beforehand: for that was the extent of his out-

look. Will Locke appointed the Vicar to meet him and a young woman in Redwater Church, the very morning after his return: there was no use in delay, except to melt down the first money he had hoarded; and Will and Dulcie were like two children, eager to have the business over and done with, and not to do again by the same parties. The Vicar was quite accustomed to these sudden calls, and he submitted to them with a little groan. He did not know who the young woman might be, and he did not care: it might be Mistress Cambridge, it might be Mistress Clarissa herself, it might be the still-room maid, or the barmaid at the "Rod and Fly;" it was all one to him. As for the young painter fellow, the quiet lads were as likely to slip into these scrapes as the rattles; indeed, the chances were rather against them: the Vicar was inclined to cry, "Catch Mr. Sam Wington in such a corner." But the Vicar was in no way responsible for a youth who was not even his own parishioner; he was not accountable for his not having worldly goods wherewith to endow the young woman whom he was to lead to the altar. *Oddly enough*, though worldly goods are

undoubtedly introduced into the service, there are no accompanying awkward questions: such as, "What are your worldly goods, M.?" or, "Have you any worldly goods, M.?" The Vicar did not care at all, except for his incipient yawns, and his disordered appetite: he was a rebuke to gossips.

When the hour came, Dulcie was distressed: not about wrong-doing, for the girl had no more idea that she was doing wrong than you have when you write a letter on your own responsibility, and at your own dictation; not at the absence of friends, for in Dulcie's day friends were considered very much in the way on such occasions. Indeed, the best accredited and most popular couples would take a start away from their companions and acquaintances, and ride ten miles or so to be married privately, and so escape all ceremony. Dulcie was troubled by the want of a wedding-gown: yes, a wedding-gown, whether it is to wear well or not, is to a woman what a wig is to a barrister, what a uniform is to a soldier. Dulcie's had no existence, not even in a snip; no one could call a half-worn sacque a

wedding-gown, and not even her mother's tabby could be brought out for fear of observation. Only think! a scoured silk: how could Dulcie "bridle" becomingly in a scoured silk? There would have been a certain appropriateness in its shabbiness in the case of one who had done with the vanities of this world: but a scoured silk beside bridal blushes!—alas, poor Dulcie!

In every other respect, there appears something touching as well as humorous in that primitive marriage-party on the grey October morning, with the autumn sunbeams, silver not golden, faintly brightening the yellowing vine, over the sexton's house, and the orange and grey lichens, the only ornaments outside the solid old church, with its low, heavy Saxon arches. The Vicar bowed with ceremony, and with a dignified and deliberate air, as he recognised Mistress Dulcie; the old clerk and his wrinkled wife stumbled into an apprehension that it was Mistress Clarissa Gage's friend who was to have the knot tied all by herself so early: but it was nothing to them either—nothing in comparison with the Christmas dole. *The lad and lass so trustful, so isolated,*

making such a tremendous venture, deserved to have the cheery sunshine on their lot, if only for their faith and firmness.

When it was over, Dulcie plucked Will's sleeve, to turn him into the vestry. One must be the guide if not the other, and "it's main often the woman," the old clerk would tell you, with a toothless grin.

Then Dulcie went with Will straight to the "Rod and Fly;" for such was the established rule. These occurrences were so frequent, that they had their etiquette cut out for them. From the "Rod and Fly" Will and Dulcie sent the coolest and most composed, the most perfectly reasonable and polite of messages, to say they had got married together that morning, and that Mistress Cambridge need not have the trouble of keeping breakfast for Mistress Dulcie. A separate apology was sent from Dulcie for not having procured the water-cresses which she was to have sought for Cambridge. Further, Mr. and Mrs. Will Locke would expect all of their friends who approved of the step they had taken to come to the "Rod and Fly," and offer their congratulations and drink

their healths that morning without fail ; as the young couple had to start by the very waggon in which they had first set eyes on each other. "Think of that, Will!" Dulcie had exclaimed, breathlessly, as if she was calling his notice to a natural phenomenon. They had now to ask and receive Dulcie's parents' blessing before they began housekeeping in Will's lodgings in London, on the strength of a month's prices with future orders and outwork from the potteries. Oh! these old easy beginnings! What have we gained by complicating them?

Will 'Locke and Dulcie had cast the die, and, on the first brush of the affair, their friends at Redwater took it as ill as possible: Clarissa was hysterical, Sam Winnington was as sulky as a bear. If this treatment were to be regarded as a foreshadowing of what the behaviour of the authorities at Fairfax would prove, then the actors in the little drama might shake in their shoes. But Will Locke placidly stood the storm they had brewed, only remembering in years to come some words which Dulcie did not retain for a sun-down. *Dulcie was now affronted and hurt, now steady*

as a stepping-stone and erect as a sweet-pea, when either of the two assailants dared to blame Will, or to imply that he should have refrained from this mischief. Why, what could Will have done? What could she have done without him? She was not ashamed to ask that, the moment they reflected upon Will Locke, though she had not borne his name an hour. Oh! child, child! . . .

Notwithstanding, it was very trying to Dulcie when Clary protested that she never would have believed that Dulcie could have stolen such a march upon her; never. Dulcie to deceive her! Dulcie to betray her! Poor Clary! Whom could she turn to for affection and integrity, in the days that might remain to her in this wicked world? She had walked all along the street with **its** four or five windows in every gable turned to the thoroughfare, with her handkerchief at her eyes, while the whole town was up, and each window full. She was so spent now, with her exertions and her righteous indignation, that she sat fanning herself in the bar: for Will and Dulcie could not even afford a private room to receive their wedding company so summarily assembled. Never was

such a business, in Clary's opinion; not that she had not often heard of its like—but to happen to a kind, silly, credulous pair, such as Dulcie and Will Locke! Clary sat fanning herself, and casting knots on her pocket-handkerchief, and glancing quickly at Sam Winnington's gloomy, dogged face, so different from the little man's wonted bland, animated countenance. What on earth could make Sam Winnington take the wilful deed so much to heart? Hear him rating Will, whom he had been used to patronize in a careless, gracious style, but upon whom he now turned in strong resentment. These reproaches were not unprovoked, but they were surely out of bounds; and their matter and manner rankled in the breasts of both these men many a day after they had crossed the Rubicon, and travelled far into the country on whose borders they were still pressing.

“You have disgraced yourself and me, sir! You have gone far to ruin the two of us! People will credit us of the same stock: a pair of needy and reckless adventurers!”

“Master Winnington, I was willing: I could do what I liked *with myself* without your leave; and

I suppose Will Locke was equally independent," fired up Dulcie.

"We'll never be mistaken for the same grain, Sam Winnington," declared Will Locke, with something like disdain. "I always knew we were clean different ; and the real substance of the wood will come out more and more distinctly, now that the mere bark is rubbed off."

Clary was mollified at last ; she kissed and sobbed over Dulcie, wished her joy sincerely, half promised to visit her in town, and slipped a posy ring from her own hand to the bride's, on the very finger where Will Locke had the face to put the marriage-ring which wedded a comely, sprightly, affectionate young woman to struggles and disappointments, and a mad contest between spirit and matter. But Sam Winnington would not so much as shake hands with Will ; though he did not bear any malice against Dulcie, and would have kissed her fingers if she would have allowed it : and the young men, erstwhile comrades, looked so glumly and grimly at each other, that it was a universal relief when the great waggon drew up at the inn door.

Dulcie, in another character now, and that even before the fall of the russet leaves—half ashamed but very proud, the little goose! of the quick transformation—stepped into the waggon; the same boxes were piled beside her; Will leapt in after her, and away they rolled. There was nothing more for Dulcie to do but to wave her hand to Clary and Cambridge, and the women of the inn (already fathoms deep in her interest), and to realise that she was now a married woman, and had young Will Locke the great painter, in his chrysalis state, to look after.

But why was Sam Winnington so irate? He had never looked sweet on Dulcie for half a second. Was it not rather that a blundering dreamer like Will Locke had anticipated him, marred his tactics, and fatally injured his scientific game? Sam came dropping down upon Redwater whenever he could find leisure, when the snow was on the ground, or when the peaches were plump and juicy, for the next two or three years. If he had not been coming on finely in his profession, heightening his charges five guineas at a time, and if Clary had not *possessed that nice six thousand pounds' fortune,*

they would have done off the matter in a trice, like Will Locke and Dulcie Cowper. Poor Sam! poor Clary!—what an expenditure of hours and days and emotions, they contrived for themselves! They were often wretched! and they shook each other's faith: it is doubtful if they ever quite recovered it. They were so low occasionally that it must have been dreadfully difficult for them to get up again; they were so bitter that how they became altogether sweet once more, without any lingering remains of the acrid flavour in their mouths, is scarcely to be imagined. They were good and true in their inmost hearts; but it does appear that some of the tricks of which they were guilty left them less honest human creatures. There was a strong dash of satire in Sam's fun afterwards; there was a sharpness in Clary's temper, and a despotism in her dignity. To be sure, Clary always liked Sam's irony a thousand times better than another man's charity, and Sam ever thought Clary's impatient, imperious ways far before the cooing of any turtle-dove in the wood; but that was only an indication that the real metal was there, not that it was not smirched and corroded with rust.

The first effect of Will and Dulcie's exploit was extremely prejudicial to the second case on the books. Uncle Barnet, a flourishing London barrister, a man with strong lines about his mouth, a wart on his forehead, and great laced flaps at his coat pockets, and who was supposed to be vehemently irresistible in the courts, hurried down to Redwater on purpose to overhaul Clary. What sort of doings were those she presided over in her maiden house at Redwater? Not the runaway marriage of a companion; that occurred every day in the most polite circles; Clary could not fairly be called to account for such a trifle; besides, a girl without a penny might do as she chose. But there was something a vast deal more scandalous lurking in the background: there was word of another fellow of the same kidney buzzing about Clary—Clary with her six thousand pounds' fortune, her Uncle Barnet, her youth, her handsome person, her what not? Now, as sure as Uncle Barnet's name was Barnet, as he wore a wig, as there was justice in the country, he would have the law of the fellow. Don't tell him the man was advancing rapidly in his profession.

What was a painter's profession?—or the son of a gallant Captain Winnington? If a gallant Captain Winnington could be nothing more than gallant, he did not deserve the name; it was a piece of fudge to cheat foolish women with. Yes; he would have the law of the fellow if he buzzed about his niece; he would have the law of Clary if she encouraged him.

What could Clary do? She had been taught to look up to Uncle Barnet; she had seen polite society under his wife's wing; she had obeyed him at once as her Mentor and her Mæcenas—as her father and prime-minister. She cried and kissed his hand, and promised not to forget her position, and to be a good girl; and as she was not engaged to Sam Winnington, and did not know for certain that he would return to Redwater for the grass-mowing or the hop-gathering, she thought she might be free to promise also that she would not see him again with her will. Of course she meant to keep her word if she might; but there are two at a bargain-making: and observe, she said “with her will;” she made no reference to Sam Winnington's pleasure. And yet, arrogant as Clary could

æ on her worst side, she had found her own intentions and purposes knocked down by Sam Winnington's determinations before now.

When Sam Winnington did come down next, Clary had such honour and spirit, that she ordered the door to be shut in his face ; but then she cried far more bitterly than she had done to Uncle Barnet, in the same hall where Sam had painted her and jested with her ; and somehow her affliction reached Sam's ears, living in a little place like Redwater at the "Rod and Fly" for several days on end.

At last another spice entered into the dish ; another puppet appeared on the boards, and increased the disorder of the former puppets. The county member did turn up. Clary was a prophet : he came on a visit to his cousin the Justice, and was struck with tall, red and white, and large-eyed Clary ; he furbished up an introduction, and offered her the most marked attention.

Mistress Clarissa was in ecstasy, so her gossips declared, and so she almost persuaded herself, even after she had certain drawbacks to her pleasure, *and certain cares intruding upon her exultation ;*

after she was again harrassed and pestered with the inconvenient resuscitation of that incorrigible little plain, vain portrait painter, Sam Winnington. He was plain—he had not the county member's Roman nose ; and he was vain—Clary had already mimicked the fling of his cravat, and the wave of his white hands. Clever, smart fellows, like Sam Winnington, are generally coxcombs. Oh, Sam! where, in order to serve your own turn now, be your purple shadows, your creamy whites, your marvellous reading of people's characters, and writing of the same on their faces, their backs, their very hands and feet, which should leave the world your delighted debtor long after it had forgotten yon member's mighty services ?

Clarissa had never danced so many dances with one evening's partner as with the smitten member, at the assembly given on the spur of the moment in his honour, whereat Sam Winnington, standing with his hat under his arm, and leaning against the carved door, was an observant spectator. He was not sullen as when Will Locke and Dulcie tumbled headlong into the pit of matrimony ; he was smiling and civil ; but his lips were white and his eyes

sunken, as if the energetic young painter did not sleep of nights.

Clary was not sincere ; she gave that infatuated, tolerably heavy, red-faced, fox-hunting member, own cousin to the Justice, every reason to suppose that she would lend him the most favourable ear, when he chose to pay her his addresses, and then afforded him the amplest provocation to cry, "Caprice—thy name is woman." She had just sung "Tantivy" to him after supper, when she sailed up to Sam Winnington, and addressed him demurely:—

"I have come to wish you good-night, sir."

"And I to wish you farewell, madam."

"Farewell is a hard word, Master Winnington," returned Clary, with a great tide of colour rushing into her face, and a gasp as for breath, and tracing figures nervously on the floor with her little shoe and its brave paste-buckle.

"It shall be said though, and that without further delay, unless three very different words be put in its place."

"Sir, you are tyrannous," protested Clary, in a *tremulous voice*.

“No, Mistress Clarissa, I have had too good cause to know who has been the tyrant in this business,” declared Sam Winnington, speaking out roundly, as a woman loves to hear a man, though it be to her own condemnation, “You have used me cruelly, Clarissa Gage ; you have abused my faith, wasted the best years of my life, and deceived my affections.”

“What were the three words, sir?” asked Clary, faint and low.

“‘Yours, Sam Winnington ;’ or else, ‘Farewell, Clarissa Gage !’”

“Yours, Sam Winnington.”

He caught her so sharp up by the arm at that sentence, that some persons said Mistress Clarissa had staggered and was about to swoon ; others, that the vulgar fellow of a painter had behaved like a brute, pulled her to his side as she was marching past him, and accused her of perjury before the whole ball-room. Bold men were apt at that time to seize aggravating women (especially if they were the wives of their bosoms) by the hairs of their heads, so that a trifling rudeness was little thought of. The county member, however, pricked up his

ing ears, flushed, fiercely stamped to the particular corner, and had a constable in his eye to arrest the beggarly offender ; but before he could get at the disputants, he had the mortification to see them retreat amicably into a side room, and the next thing announced to him was, that Mistress Clarissa had evanished home, before anybody could get rightly at the bottom of the mystery.

Very fortunately, the county member ascertained the following day, before he had compromised his pride another hair's-breadth, that the fickle damsel had accepted the painter's escort the previous evening, and had admitted the painter at an incredibly early hour the subsequent morning. After such indiscretion, the great man would have nothing more to say to Mistress Clarissa, but departed in great dudgeon, and would never so much as set his foot within Redwater again ; not even at the following election.

Uncle Barnet was forced to come round and acknowledge, with a very bad grace, that legislation in heiresses' marriages—in any marriage—is out of the question. No man knew how a marriage would turn out ; you might as well pledge yourself for

the weather next morning: certainly there were signs for the wise; but were weather almanacs deceptive institutions or were they not? The innocent old theory of marriages being made in heaven was the best. Clary was not such a mighty catch after all: a six thousand pounds' fortune was not inexhaustible, and the county member might never have come the length of asking its owner's price. People did talk of a foolish engagement in his youth to one of his yeomen's daughters, and of a wealthy old aunt who ruled the roast; though her well-grown nephew, not being returned for a rotten borough, voted with dignity for so many thousands of his fellow-subjects in the Commons. Uncle Barnet, with a peculiarly wry face, did reluctantly what he did not often advise his clients to do, unless in desperate circumstances—he compromised.

Clary was made a wife in the height of summer, with all the rites and ceremonies of the Church, with all the damasks, and laces, and leadings by the tips of the fingers, and lavishings of larkspurs, lupins, and tiger-lilies proper for the occasion, which Dulcie had lost. Nay, the supper came off

at the very "Rod and Fly," with the tap open to the roaring, jubilant public; a score of healths were drunk upstairs with all the honours, the bride and bridegroom being king and queen of the company: even Uncle Barnet owned that Sam Winnington was very complaisant—rather exceeded in complacency, he supplemented scornfully; but surely Sam might mend that fault with others in the bright days to come. It is only the modern English who act Hamlet *minus* the Prince of Denmark; sitting at the bridal feast without bride or bridegroom.

They say hearts are often caught on the rebound, and if all ill-treated suitors spoke out warmly yet sternly like Sam Winnington, and did not merely fence about and either sneer or whine, more young fools might be saved, even when at touch and go with their folly, after the merciful fate of Clary, and to the benefit of themselves and of society.

V.—DULCIE AND WILL AT HOME IN
ST. MARTIN'S LANE.

While Sam and Clarissa were fighting the battles of vanity and the affections down in the *southern shire* in quite a rural district, among

mills and ash-trees, and houses with gardens and garden bowers, William and Dulcie were combating real flesh-and-blood woes—woes that would not so much set your teeth on edge, as soften and melt your tough, dry heart—among the brick and mortar of London. These several years were not light sunshiny years to the young couple. It is of no use saying that a man may prosper if he will, and that he has only to cultivate potatoes and cabbages in place of jessamine and passion-flowers; no use making examples of Sir Joshua and Vandyke, and telling triumphantly that they knew their business and did it simply—only pretending to get a livelihood and satisfy the public to the best of their ability, but ending in becoming great painters. One man's meat is another man's poison; one man's duty is not his neighbour's. When shall we apprehend or apply that little axiom? The Duchess of Portland killed three thousand snails in order that she might complete the shell-work for which she received so much credit; Dulcie would not have put her foot voluntarily on a single snail for a pension.

It was Will Locke's fate to vibrate between

drudgery and dreaming ; always tending more inevitably towards the latter, and lapsing into more distant, absorbing trances, till he became more and more fantastic and unearthly, with his thin light hair, his half-transparent cheek, and his strained eyes. To prophesy on cardboard and canvas, in flower and figure, with monster and star, crescent and triangle, in emerald green and ruby red and sea blue, in dyes that, like those of the Bassani, resembled the clear shining of a handful of jewels, to prophesy in high art, to be half pitied, half derided, and to starve : was that Will Locke's duty ?

Will thought so, in the most artless, unblemished, unswerving style ; and he was a devout fellow as well as a gifted one. He bowed to revelation, and read nature's secrets well before he forsook her for Heaven, or rather Hades. He devoted himself to the sacrifice : he did not grudge his lust of the eye, his lust of the flesh, his pride of life. He devoted Dulcie, not without pangs ; and he devoted his little sickly children pining and dying in St. Martin's Lane. He must follow his calling, *he must fulfil his destiny.*

Dulcie was not quite such an enthusiast : she did love, honour, and obey Will Locke, but she was sometimes almost mad to see him such a wreck. It had been a seen evil, and she had looked down into the gulf; but she had missed the depths. She had never seen its gloomy, dark, dreary nooks, poor lass! in her youthful boldness and lavishness; and our little feminine Curtius in the scoured silk, with the powdered brown curls, had not merely to penetrate them in one plunge, but had to descend, stumbling and groping her way, and starting back at the sense of confinement, the damp and the darkness. Who will blame her that she sometimes turned her head and looked back, and stretched up her arms from the desert to the flesh-pots of Egypt? She would have borne anything for her husband; and she did work marvels: learned to engrave for him, coloured constantly with her light, pliant fingers, and drew and painted from old fresh memories those articles of stoneware for the potteries. She clothed herself in the cheapest and most lasting of printed linen sacques and mob caps, and hoods and aprons, fed herself and him and the children on morsels well nigh miraculously. She

even swallowed down the sight of Clary in her cut velvet and her own coach, whose panel Sam Winnington himself had not thought it beneath him to touch up for Clary's delectation and glory. If Will would only have tarried longer about his flowers and bees, and groves and rattlesnakes ; if he had even stopped short at faces like those of Socrates, Cæsar, Cleopatra, Fair Rosamond—what people could understand with help—and not slid off faster and more fatally into that dim delirium of good and evil, angels and archangels, the devil of temptation and the goblin of the flesh, the red fiend of war, and the pale spirit of peace !

The difference which originated at Will and Dulcie's marriage had ended in alienation. Dulcie thought that Sam Winnington would have bridged it over at one time, if Will would have made any sign of meeting his overtures, or acknowledged Sam's talents and fortune: nay, even if Will had refrained from betraying his churlish doubts of Sam's perfect deserts.

But no, this Will would not deign to do. The gentle, patient painter, contented with his own *estimation of his endowments*, and resigned to be

mis-judged and neglected by the world, had his own indomitable doggedness. He would never flatter the world's low taste for commonplace, and its miserable short-sightedness; he would never pay homage to Sam Winnington which he did not deserve—a man very far from his equal—a mere clever portrait-painter, little better than a skilled stone-mason. Thus Sam Winnington and Will Locke took to flushing when each other's names were mentioned—sitting bolt upright and declining to comment on each other's works, or else dismissing each other's efforts in a few supremely contemptuous words. Certainly the poor man rejected the rich not one whit less decidedly than the rich man rejected the poor, and the Mordecais have always the best of it. If we and our neighbours will pick out each other's eyes, commend us to the part of brave little Jack, rather than that of the belligerent Giant, even when they are only eyeing each other previous to sitting down to the ominous banquet.

But this was a difficulty to Dulcie, as it is to most women. No one thinks of men's never showing a malign influence in this world; it is only

good women who are expected to prove angels outright here below. But it does seem that there is something more touching in their having to stifle lawful instincts, and in their being forced to oppose and overcome unlawful passions — covetousness, jealousy, wrath, “hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness.”

Dulcie, with the sharpness of her little face, divested of all its counterbalancing roundness—a keen, worn little face since the day it had smiled so confusedly but generously out of the scurvy silk in the church at Redwater—was a sweet-looking woman under her care-laden air. Some women retain sweetness under nought but skin and bone; they will not pinch into meanness and spite; they have still faith and charity. One would not wonder though Dulcie afforded more vivid glimpses of *il Beata's* angels after the contour of her face was completely spoilt.

You can fancy the family room in St. Martin's Lane, some five or six years after Will Locke and Dulcie were wed, with its strange litter of acids and aquafortis, graving tools and steel plates. Will and Dulcie might have been some of the

abounding false coiners, had it not been for the colours, the canvas, and the vessels from the potteries, all huddled together without attention to effect. Yet these were not without order, for they were too busy people to be able to afford to be purely disorderly. They could not have had the curtain less scant, for the daylight was precious to them; they had not space for more furniture than might have sufficed a poor tradesman or better sort of mechanic; only there were traces of gentle birth and breeding in the casts, the prints and portfolios, the Dutch clock, and the great hulk of a state-bed hung with the perpetual dusky yellow damask, which served as a nursery for the poor listless little children.

Presently Dulcie looked after the sops, and surreptitiously awarded Will the Benjamin's portion, and Will ate it absently with the only appetite there; though he, too, was a consumptive-looking man—a good deal more so than when he attracted the pity of the good wife at the “Nine Miles Inn.” Then Dulcie crooned to the children of the milk-porridge she would give them next night, and sang to them as she lulled them to sleep, her old breezy,

bountiful English songs, "Young Roger came tapping at Dolly's window," and "I met my lad at the garden gate," and brushed their faces into laughter with the primroses and hyacinths she had bought for Will in Covent Garden Market. Will asked to see them in the spring twilight, and described the banks where they grew, with some revival of his early lore, and added a tale of the fairies who made them their round tables and galleries, which caused the eldest child (the only one who walked with Dulcie in his little coat to the church where he was christened) to open his heavy eyes, and clap his hot hands, and cry, "More, father, more." Will and Dulcie looked gladly into each other's eyes at his animation, and boasted what a stamping, thundering man he would yet live to be—that midge, that sprite, with Dulcie's small skeleton bones, and Will's dry, lustreless, fair hair!

Anon while Dulcie was still rocking one of these weary children moaning in its sleep, Will must needs strike a light to resume his beloved labours; but first he directed his candle to his canvas, and *called on Dulcie* to contemplate and comprehend,

while he murmured and raved to her of the group of fallen men and women crouching in the den—of the wind of horror raising their hair,—of the dawn of hope bursting in the eastern sky, and high above them the fiendish crew, and the captains of the Blessed still swaying to and fro in the burdened air, and striking deadly blows for supremacy. And Dulcie, open-eyed and open-mouthed as of old, looked at the captives, as if listening to the strife that was to come, and well-nigh heard the thunder of the captains and the shouting, while her eye was always eagerly pointed to that pearly streak which was to herald the one long, cool, calm, bright day of humanity. No wonder Dulcie was as demented as Will, and thought it would be a very little matter though the milk-porridge were sour on the morrow, or if the carrier did not come with the price in his pocket for these sweet pots, and bowls, and pipkins: she believed her poor babies were well at rest from the impending dust, and din, and danger; and smiled deep, quiet smiles at Clary—poor Clary, with her cut velvet, her coach, and her black boy. Verily Will and Dulcie could afford to refer not only pleasantly

but mercifully to Sam Winnington and Clary that night.

“It is contemptible to lose sight of the sublimity of life even to enjoy perfect ease and happiness.” That is a very grand saying; but oh, dear! we are poor creatures; and though Dulcie is an infinitely nobler being now than then, the tears are fit to start into our eyes when we remember the little brown head which “bridled finely,” the little feet which pranced lightly, and the little tongue which wagged, free from care, in the stage waggon on the country road yon clear September day.

VI.—SAM AND CLARISSA IN COMPANY IN
LEICESTER SQUARE.

Sam and Clarissa were worshipful people now. Uncle Barnet no longer invited them to his second-rate parties; Uncle Barnet was really proud to visit them in their own home. Sam Winnington was a discerning mortal; he had a faculty for discovering genius, especially that work-a-day genius which is in rising men; and he certainly had bird-lime *wherewith* he could fix their feet under his hospi-

table table. The best of the sages and wits of the day were to be met in Sam Winnington's house; the best of the sages and wits of the day thought Clary a fine woman, though a little lofty, and Sam a good fellow, an honest chum, a delightful companion, and at the same time the prince of portrait-painters. What an eye he had! what a touch! How much perception of individual character, and at the same time, what sober judgment and elegant taste to preserve his sitters ladies and gentlemen, as well as men and women! Cavillers would have it, the ladies and gentlemen, like Sam's condescension at his wedding-feast, overtopped the mark; but it was erring on the safe side. Who would not sink the man in the gentleman? After all, perhaps the sages and wits were not altogether disinterested: almost every one of them filled Sam Winnington's famous sitter's chair, and depended on Sam's tasteful pencil handing down their precious noses and chins to posterity.

Sam and Clary were going abroad, in that coach, which had made Dulcie Locke look longingly after it, and ponder what it would be for one of her frail children to have "a ride" on the box

as far as Kensington. They were bound for the house of one of the lordly patrons of arts and letters. They were bound for my Lord Burlington's, or the Earl of Mulgrave's, or Sir William Beechey's—for a destination where they were a couple of mark and distinction, to be received with the utmost consideration. Sam reared smartly his round but not ill-proportioned person in his rich brocade coat, and Clary towered in the corner with her white throat, and her filmy ivory-coloured laces.

We won't see many more distinguished men and women than the members of the set who frequented the old London tea-parties; and Sam Winnington and Clary were in it and of it, while Will Locke and Dulcie were poverty-stricken and alone with their bantlings in the garret in St. Martin's Lane. What becomes of the doctrine of happiness being equally divided in this world, as so many comfortable persons love to opine? Possibly we don't stand up for it; or we may have our loophole, by which we may let ourselves out and drag it in. Was that illustrious voyage all plain sailing? Sam Winnington used to draw a *long sigh*, and lay back his head and close his eyes

in his coach, after the rout was over. He was not conscious of acting ; he was not acting, and one might dare another, if that other were not a cynic, to say that the motive was unworthy. He wanted to put his sitters on a good footing with themselves ; he wanted to put the world on a good footing with itself ; it was the man's nature. He did not go very far down ; he was not without his piques, and like other good-natured men—like Will Locke, for that matter—when he was once offended he was apt to be vindictive ; but he was buoyant, and that little man must have had a great fund of charity about him somewhere to be drawn upon at first sight. Still this popularity was no joke. There were other rubs. The keen love of approbation in the little man, which was at the bottom of his suavity, was galled by the least condemnation of his work and credit ; he was too manly to enact the old man and the ass, but successful Sam Winnington was about as soon pricked as a man who wears a fold of silk on his breast instead of the old plate armour.

Clary had her own aggravations: with all her airs Clary was not a match for the indomitable, unhesi-

tating, brazen (with a golden brazenness) women of fashion. Poor Clary had been the beauty at Redwater, the most modish, the best informed woman there ; and here, in this world of London, to which Sam had got her an introduction, she was a nobody ; scarcely to be detected among the host of ordinary fine women, except by Sam's reflected glory. This was a doubtful boon, an unsatisfactory rise in the social scale. Then Clary had nobody beyond Sam to look to, and hope and pray for : she had not even sickly children to nurse, like Dulcie. Sam would only live to future generations in his paintings. Ah, well ! it was fortunate that Sam was a man of genius.

You may believe, for all the grand company, the coach, the cut velvet, the laces, and the black boy, that this world was but a mighty sorry, uneasy place to Sam and Clarissa as they rolled home over the pavement, while Will and Dulcie slept with little betwixt them and the stars.

VII.—STRIPS SOME OF THE THORNS FROM THE
HEDGE AND THE GARDEN ROSES.

Will Locke lay dying. One would have thought, from his tranquillity, confidence, and love of work, even along with spare diet, that he would have lived long. But dreamland cannot be a healthy region for a man in the body to inhabit. Will was going where his visions would be as nought to the realities. He was still one of the most peaceful, the happiest of fellows, as he had been all his life. He babbled of the pictures he would paint in another region, as if he were conscious that he had painted in a former state. It seemed, too, that the poor fellow's spiritual life, apart from his artist career, took sounder, cheerier substance and form, as the other life grew dimmer and wilder. Dulcie was almost reconciled to let Will go ; for he would be more at home in the spirit-world than here, and she had seen sore trouble, which taught her to acquiesce, when there were a Father and a Friend seen glimmeringly but hopefully beyond the gulf. Dulcie moved about, with her child holding by her skirts, resigned and helpful in her sorrow.

The most clouded faces in the old room in St. Martin's Lane—with its old litter, so grievous to-day, of brushes, and colours, and graving tools, and wild pictures which the painter would never touch more—were those of Sam Winnington and Clary. Will had bidden Sam and Clary be sent for to his deathbed; and, offended as they had been, and widely severed as they were now, they rose and came trembling to obey the summons. Clary gave one look, put her handkerchief quickly to her eyes, and then turned and softly covered the tools, lifted the boiling pot to the side of the grate, and took Dulcie's fretful, wondering child in her lap; not a fine lady now, but a woman in distress. Sam stood immoveable and uncertain, with a man's awkwardness, but a face working with suppressed emotion.

Will felt no restraint; he sat up in his faded coat with his cravat open to give him air, and turning his wan face with its dark shadow towards Sam Winnington in his velvet coat, with a diamond-ring sparkling on his splashed hand, and his colour, which had grown rosy of late years, heightened *with emotion*, addressed his old friend.

“I wanted to see you, Sam ; I had something on my mind, and I could not depart with full satisfaction without saying it to you ; I have done you wrong.”

Sam raised his head, startled, and stared at the sick man : poor Will Locke ! were his wits utterly gone ? they had always been somewhat to seek : though he had been a wonderful fellow, too, in his own way—wonderful at flowers, and birds, and beasts, if he had but been content with them.

“I called you a mere portrait-painter, Sam,” continued the dying man ; “I refused to acknowledge your inspiration, and I knew better : I saw that to you was granted the discernment to read the human face and the soul behind it, as to me it was given to hold converse with nature and the subtle essence of good and evil. Most painters before you have painted masks ; but yours are the clothings of immortals : and your flesh is wonderful, Sam—how you have perfected it ! And it is not true what they tell you of your draperies : you are the only man alive who can render them picturesque and not absurd, refined and not stinted. You were a genteel fellow, too, from the begin-

ning, and would no more do a dirty action when you had only silver coins to jingle in your pockets, than now when they are stuffed with gold moidores."

"Oh, Will, Will!" cried Sam, desperately bowing his head; "I have done little for you."

"Man!" cried Will, with a kingly incredulity, "what could you do for me? I wanted nothing I was withdrawn somewhat from my proper field, to mould and colour for daily bread; but Dulcie saved me many a wasted hour, and I could occupy the period of a mechanical job in conceiving—no, in marshalling my visions. Mine was a different, an altogether higher line than yours, Sam; you will forgive me if I have told you too abruptly," and the poverty-stricken painter, at his last gasp, looked deprecatingly at his old honoured associate.

But he was too far gone for ceremony; he was too near release for pain. He had even shaken hands with the few family cares he was capable of experiencing, he had commended Dulcie to Sam Winnington without a single doubt. He felt, like Gainsborough, that they were all going to heaven, and Vandyke was in the company. Where was the

room for misunderstanding now! Here was the end of strife, and the conclusion of the whole matter. Some other sentences Will spoke before his parting breath; and when his hearers heard him murmuring the word "garment," they fancied he still raved of his calling—on to the end. But his mind had turned and taken refuge in another calling, and it was in reference to it that he quoted the fragment of a verse, "And besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment; and as many as touched him were made whole." "Sam, have you put forth your hand?"

Thus Will Locke departed rejoicing. Dulcie, a thin forlorn widow woman, talked with a lingering echo of his elevation, of her Will's being beyond lamentation, and of herself and her boy's being well off with their faith in the future. Dulcie had a proud, constant presentiment in the recesses of her woman's heart that the husband and father's good name and merited reputation would surely find his memory out in this world yet. She had no material possessions save a few of his gorgeous, gruesome, hieroglyphical pictures, and what she had borrowed or inherited of his lower cunning

in tinting, a more marketable commodity in the present mind of society.

Dulcie disposed of Will's paintings, reluctantly, realising an astonishing amount; astonishing, unless you take into account the fact that his companions and contemporaries were not sure that he was a mere madman now that he had gone from their ranks. They wished to atone for their dislike to his vagaries by preserving some relics of the curious handling, the grotesque imagination, the delicate taste, and the finely accurate knowledge of vegetable and animal forms which had passed away.

Then Dulcie went back in the waggon to her old friends at Fairfax, and, by so doing, probably saved her sole remaining child. Dulcie did not know whether to be glad or sorry when she found that Will's boy had no more of his father's genius than might have been derived from her own quick talents, and neat, nice fingers. And she was comforted: not in the sense of marrying again—oh, dear, no! she cherished the memory of her Will as a sacred thing, and through all her returning *plumpness and rosiness*—for she was still a young

woman—never forgot the honour she had borne in being a great painter's wife and companion for half a dozen years. Perhaps, good as she was, she grew rather to brandish this credit in the faces of the cloth-workers and their wives ; to speak a little bigly of the galleries and the Academy, of *chiaroscuro* and perspective, of which the poor ignoramuses knew nothing : to be obstinate on her dignity, and stand out on her gentility far before that of the attorneys' and the doctors' wives ;—and all this though she had been, as you may remember, the least assuming of girls, the least exacting of wives. But women have many sides to their nature, and remain puzzles—puzzles in their virtues as in their vices ; and if Dulcie were ever guilty of ostentation, you have not to dive deep to discover that it was out of respect to her Will—to her great, simple, single-hearted painter.

No, Will Locke's was not a life wrecked on the rocks of adversity, any more than Sam Winnington's was stranded on the sandbanks of prosperity. The one did a little to mellow the other before the scenes closed, and Will Locke was less obliged to Sam Winnington than Sam

to Will in the end. Will's nature and career were scarcely within the scope of Sam's genial material philosophy; but the thought of them did grow to cross Sam's mind during his long work-hours; and good painters' hours are mostly stoutly, steadily, indefatigably long. He pondered them even when he was jesting playfully with the affable aristocrat under his pencil; he spoke of them often to Clary when he was sketching at her work-table of an evening; and she, knitting beside him, would stop her work and respond freely. Then Sam would rise, and, with his hands behind his back, go and look at that lush, yet delicate picture of the Redwater Bower which he had got routed out, framed, and hung in Clary's drawing-room. He would contemplate it for many minutes at a study, and he would repeat the study scores and scores of times with always the same result—the conviction of the ease and security resulting from spiritualizing matter, and the difficulty and hopelessness of materializing spirit. And after these long looks into the past, Sam would be more forbearing in pronouncing verdicts on his *brethren*, worsted in the effort to express

what was inherent in their minds ; would not decide quite so dogmatically, that all a man had to do was to be sound and diligent, and keep himself far apart from high-flown rubbish, like a commonsense, sober-minded Englishman. And Sam came to be less feverishly anxious about his own monopoly of public esteem ; less nettled at art-criticism ; perhaps less vivacious in his talents and well-doing, but more manly and serene in his triumph, as Will Locke had been manly and serene in his failure.

Will Locke's life and death, so devoid of pomp and renown, might be beyond lamentation, ~~after~~ all.

THE GREAT ROAD AND THE MARKET-PLACE.

I.—THE MAIL STOPPED.



ON a summer night in the time of the German Georges, one of the coaches on the south road was rolling through green lanes and past village commons. It was not unaccompanied. Horsemen before and horsemen behind, in wrap-rascals and with blunderbusses, protected His Majesty's mail—by no means very effectually. The gentlemen of the road were not only more picturesque—in their scarlet cloaks and feathered hats, with crape over their handsome, impudent faces—than those guards, but they were also much more capable in their business. You *could not open a newsprint* but you read of His

Majesty's mail having been robbed on Willow Heath or at Brookleigh cross roads. It did not much interfere with this branch of business or diversion that highwaymen went to Tyburn. They were hung by the dozen, or at least were sure to bear each other company in pairs or trios, and their bones swung in chains—dismal sign-posts—at every shady, secluded point on the great roads. Indeed, so used were travellers to a fight, or a scuffle, if nothing worse, that it is probable the more adventurous were a shade disappointed when they wholly escaped. There was then nothing to talk about in the village inns or wainscotted parlours, nothing to brag of to simple applauding ears. It was like having the trouble of rounding Cape Horn without catching sight of a single iceberg. Any way, the bulky coaches continued to run, though not so frequently as in later days, and had their freight, not quite so numerous in proportion to their comparatively rare expeditions, but still they were not to be slighted. On the present occasion there were only three “insides;” but outside, perched and stowed away among bales and boxes, whence they could see far and

near, there sat, jeering each other, comforting each other, digging into each other's sides with rough elbows, and dashing into each other's humours with brawny, boisterous jokes, a whole Canterbury pilgrimage of slim students, spruce tradesmen, slovenly graziers, and country women in steeple-crowned hats, and bearing baskets. Our affair, however, is with "the insides"—a gentle story should only deal with gentlefolks.

Not that they were all gentlefolks in the inside either. A shrewd observer could have guessed that one was the elderly confidential maid of my lady yawning and groaning in the corner yonder. My lady's lap-dog and parrot were of course there too—a beast and a bird of gentle degree. The middle-aged gentleman who held himself aloof, and read now and then in a little volume bound in black leather, much worn by constant use, was truly a plain enough specimen of the quality. He wore no buckles in his square shoes. There was no lace on his coat, and no powder in his light brown hair. A parson's bands were openly displayed, and the frills at his wrists were of simple *cambric*. But look how clean cut his features;

how white his hand in its sinewy shapeliness; how easy his carriage; how full of quiet dignity his bearing! He is but a parson, and, strange to say, not ashamed of his calling. Undoubtedly he is a man of birth and breeding. My lady perceives all that with the corner of her eye, now so languid, now so impetuous, querulous now, and again satirical. And my lady should know well, for, considering her years, few have had greater experience among fine company and fine gentlemen, from the Princesses and Lord Fanny to that pretty fellow Bond, the actor, with whom wild Lady Harriet—Lady Mary's crony—had eloped.

But my lady is of quite different metal. She is not old; not above or four-and-twenty, though her soft cheeks are wan where the paint has been rubbed off, and hollow with experiences of the gay revels kept up till daybreak. She has a feverish, capricious, fitful face which should have expressed something infinitely better. The fading lines of beauty are of a noble character; the brow is open, the little pouted, twisted mouth has a thousand sensitive curves and soft dimples

hovering round it. It is a face that should have shown thought and feeling—it should have been a good, kind face; but it is only a dissatisfied, peevish, scornful one, its varied elements expressive of vacant wretchedness.

Poor Mrs. Belinda (familiarly and jauntily termed Mrs. Bell)—was a rich indigo planter's orphan daughter, and heiress of the easy county member, and his fat, sleepy wife. They are very well pleased with Belinda's wit, and wealth, and beauty, and by no means tired of their charge; but they do not control her, nor dote upon her as her dead father and mother might have done. They are rather amused at her whims, and her instinctive aversion to give any one of those heady extravagant beaux a right to call himself master of her charms and fortune. They submit, with a few remonstrances and great coolness, when she suddenly tires of auctions and ridottos, and takes it into her head to go down with her maid Dutton and her man-servant Roger to Dutton's mother, who has a cottage in Sussex. It is the height of summer, and Mrs. Belinda was once in the *country* when a child, and found rest playing

among the young lambs and the buttercups. Perhaps she may find rest among the young lambs and the buttercups again. Oh! spoilt, fine lady, you have been too affected and frivolous; you have divorced yourself from nature. See, the may is actually scratching the sides of the coach, and those graziers are thrusting down their sticks to grapple it because it smells rarely; and you can only turn to your ambergris. The bay mare and her foal neighing over the farm gate win no notice from you. The daffodil sky does not remind you of the last spring's daffodils, it has only a faint trace of amber brocades. Even where it is rudiest it only suggests to you the heap of gold guineas when my lord is at play, his haggard face seen by the guttering candles in a corner of the ball-room. But, poor heart! there is some good in you yet, for you are sick of these follies.

Roger, riding there among the coach guard, is a smart servant enough in his long vest and long boots. Dutton is a heavy lump of matter-of-fact fidelity in a dowdy cap and cloak. She feels for nothing, is concerned with nothing, but my lady's aching finger, or the satin mantua, lace-hood, and

riding-hat with which she is plentifully encumbered. Perhaps she has a thought for Maitre the poodle, and Poll the parrot. She listens reverentially to her mistress's stories when she chooses to be communicative, likes to hear her talk of her partners, her freaks, her flouts. Dutton, indeed, is so wedded to her post that she thinks less of her poor blind mother, knitting and nodding yonder in her clematis porch, or by the Dutch tiles of her chimney nook, than of her flighty mistress's coquetry. But Dutton herself is a worthy soul, and a dutiful daughter, for she regularly makes the old woman a liberal offering from her wages. At present, when she has an idea to spare from my lady, who is tossing on her cushions, or Poll, viciously fluttering to peck her finger, or Maitre, wheezing after his last bun, it is one of dim forboding horror of those terrible gentlemen of the road. The bleached bones look so ghastly, dangling in rusty fetters under the rosy sunset. Either this, or an anxious thought towards her mother's lodgings, which are let to fishing and sporting gentlemen, but which she is afraid Mrs. Belinda will hardly find to her taste, *though my lady has insisted on occupying them, and*

Dutton has been altogether powerless to dissuade her.

“Holloa ! holloa ! stop coach ! draw up, or die !”
“Mercy on us ! it is the gentlemen of the road !”
They issue from behind a house, and scour through the half-grown rustling wheat—a good score of them, led by a commander who might have been a knight in mail and helmet, so aristocratic is his domino. His velvet coat is seen peeping out beneath it, and his mask is silvered. They are like which the very dominos and masks, Madam Belinda, you have so often seen in the throng at the fashionable masquerades.

There are volleys of oaths and exclamations, lashing and rearing of horses. Very shortly the mounted grooms close in. A positive howl is set up by Dutton. Mrs. Belinda has rather an aroused, interested air about her ; while the parson deliberately draws down the window at his side, though he had no pistol, not even a rapier, only a cudgel like dear, homely, benevolent Mr. Burchell.

It was but an inglorious warfare after all. The grooms’ rusty old firelocks just flashed in the pan. The highwaymen magnanimously fired a stray

or two high over-head, and contented themselves with punching the ears of a turbulent cattle-herd, and, quick as lightning, pinioning the fieriest of the students. In a moment they were actually exchanging cool greetings with one of the countrymen in the steeple-crowned hats. "What! pretty, lass; you there!"

Ay, ay, Dick, my man, it won't be long till I'll wear the hempen cravat."

The coachman, who had drawn up, now sat as motionless still as if it were a point of honour to permit His Majesty's mail to be quietly sacked and gutted. The grooms were tumbling down obediently from the roadsters, or scampering off faster than the gentlemen of the road had ridden to the onslaught. Belinda's eyes, quite clear considering the occasion, detected a grin of intelligence on the face of that false villain Roger, who was as accommodating as the rest.

The same submission and vile collusion in the train followed an act of sordid pocket-picking. Faugh! There was nothing in it savoured even of the mock heroic! Belinda felt as if she could have flung her fist in the chief's face, and followed it by

her gold watch, and been faintly gratified if she had dented that silvered head-piece, or bruised the impudent cheek.

But, after all, the rogues are not proceeding in the common way to rifle pockets and appropriate jewels. They have been consulting together, and now their mouth-piece proclaims through his nose: "Ladies and Gentlemen of his Majesty's public — no harm is intended to you, not a stiver will be taken from you! You may well be astounded at our clem-en-cy and grateful for our goodness. Our captain for the night wishes a word with a lady in the coach. Let her grant it him — and she ain't in a very good position to refuse it — and, 'pon my honour, the rest shall go scot free, barring always your black eye, my good man, and your cut wrists, my fine spark. Come, ma'am, descend!"

"No, no, she shan't!" screamed Dutton.

"Let me out to speak to them," said my lady coolly.

"No woman shall become their victim," protested the parson, getting vehement, and actually red in the face.

Mrs. Belinda put her hand on the parson's arm, and said, "Good sir, don't waste your courage for me; (Dutton, have done with that horrid noise!) I think I know the man—he is not what he seems. I'm not in the least affrighted; he will not dare to do me a real injury;" and in spite of the clergyman's fatherly "Stay, madam, stay, I beg, I entreat"—she swam gracefully out before his astonished eyes, accepted the highwayman's hand, and walked away with him, perhaps half a dozen yards, along the field path by the ditch with its flags and briony hedge, while the rest of the cavalcade remained waiting the result of the puzzling interview.

The clergyman broke the comparative stillness by commencing sonorously, "Misguided men!" but he was interrupted by cries: "Hey, a sermon from a new-fashioned pulpit," "Gag him," "Pink him," "No, no, let his reverence say his say, and Jack will deliver the amen." The sounds subsiding, the parson continued unmoved: "Whether you be what you seem or not, you are engaged in an unlawful act—an act of violence—and they who use the sword shall perish by the sword." But,

as he said the last word, there arose such a swell of derision, that the well-modulated sweet voice of the parson was lost for a time. After a little, however, it made itself heard as calmly as before. "But I do not mean to judge you—I am not here to condemn—that is not my commission; my business is to befriend you, and if you will meet me, my masters, as many of you as can, at the market-place of Hazelton, to-morrow afternoon, at three o'clock, I will tell you more of my message, and, please the Lord, show you something to your eternal advantage." The remarkable simplicity and confidence of this invitation fairly staggered the rude audience. The gentlemen of the road looked down to the ground, or stared blankly at each other. The graziers, relieved from anticipations of loss, whistled as loud as they could; while the clerks and students whispered and nodded to each other, and bent over the coach half curious, half contemptuous.

In the meantime, the couple by the trampled wheat field had their colloquy; strange to say it was Mrs. Belinda who spoke first. "You are an oaf, Master Fenton, an insolent oaf, to bribe my

servants and dog my steps," she exclaimed with the most superb disdain. She seemed to forget wholly that the fine gentleman, if he were daring enough, could have strangled her, or drowned her in the next pond, or have lifted her on one of those fine horses and spirited her away, while she, helpless, could only gnash her teeth, and run her nails into her palms.

"Madam," answered the gentleman, in a piqued but pacific tone, at the same time removing his mask, and exposing a face not unlike her own in its wasted comeliness, the only difference at this moment being that his was eager and treacherous, while hers was set and hard,—“Madam, your uncle threw me over as light as a feather. Your Roger only told me that you were going down into the country—he knew no more. I took this road at a venture. Having heard you say that you knew Sussex, I reasoned that you must have friends in that quarter.”

“And fine company you have found on the road—mighty fine and fitting company!” repeated Mrs. Belinda, scornfully.

“Oh!” replied Master Fenton, “they stopped

my coach only half an hour ago, and I offered to let them have my money peaceably, and to send them another roll of notes to a safe place to-morrow, provided they would lend me their countenance to intercept a lady travelling in the mail, and allow me five minutes to ask her an important question, and then suffer her and her fellow-travellers to go on without further molestation." He was not a whit abashed, striking his boot all the time with that air of ineffable effrontery and graceless good humour which distinguished the beaux of that era.

But the lady was not to be so easily propitiated: "Suppose I decline to answer your question, sir; suppose I denounce you to the government;" so she flounced.

"Surely you could never be so unkind, Mrs. Belinda!" remonstrated he; "but if it were to come to the worst, I am certain it would reconcile me to my fate to see you come and weep repentant tears at my execution; since all the blood of the Fentons—good blood, madam, in its own quarter—would not suffice to substitute the block for the gibbet."

“What do you want?” demanded the lady, turning short. “My feet are soaked with mud; shall certainly catch cold, and go off in a decline.”

“To spite me, Mrs. Bell? that would be cruel! But why have you fled from town and left St. James’s and Kensington in mourning?”

“Because I’m tired of it,” said the lady bluntly, and with cold cutting confidence; “I’ve tried the hottest rooms and the greatest crowds and the snugest suppers; I’ve filled my china closet, and bundled all the shepherdesses and dolphins out the back way, to pay my next quarter’s bills; I’ve been to the drawing-rooms, both the Queen’s and the Princess’s, and to Richmond Hill; I’ve no turn for play. I tell you there’s no more for me to do. I almost wish I would take the small-pox, and wake up some morning hideous, and avoided by all the world, just for novelty’s sake. Who knows, perhaps I would feel all the better and more reasonable for it. I’m tired of being what you call a spirited woman, and you know all the town recognises me for that.”

“*Faith madam, they do; but don’t grow des-*

perate; marry me, and I may perhaps break your spirit."

"Never! Wear your yoke and bear your name, and know that the last is dragged through every tavern and gambling-house and evil assembly in London like that of other husbands! Where would be the gain? I should only grow less virtuous. I could not pretend to be fond of you, but yet I might die of jealousy. No, no; I'm not so mad. If we poor women have not our liberty we have nothing—'tis our last good."

The gentleman winced. "I don't pretend to an equality of excellence and parts," he exclaimed indignantly, "but the humblest devotion, the most unbounded admiration, might win a little more complacency. By George, madam, I'm blind in my pursuit of you."

Mrs. Belinda performed a sweeping curtsey as the night wind began to blow over the wheat field. "Then, sir, if you have now recovered your sight will you permit me to pass?"

"I believe you would not care a straw though I shot myself," he complained, with some feeling.

“Better not try, sir, since you could not witness my remorse,” she answered mockingly.

“Accept my hand,” he urged again passionately; [I will carry you to the Hall, where you may have your fill of the country and its clodhoppers, state and safety. What was the use of your starting off on this wild-goose chase, to live like a princess disguised as a beggar? I swear it is a shame in your uncle to permit it.”

“No reflections on my uncle, Master Lancelot. I vow they are of a piece with the rest of your breeding.”

“Then you will go with me before the next morn-
ing, surprise them up in the town yonder with the news of our wedding, and proceed straight to the Hall. It is a fine old place, the steward has always assured me,” continued the gentleman, evidently hurried away by the warmth of his wishes, to which she had not seemed to offer sufficient obstacle. He advanced a step.

“By your leave—not without my leave, sir,” said Mrs. Belinda, with wicked emphasis, drawing back.

The gallant ground his teeth—these gallants

were always in frenzies of passion. "And why not, mistress, since it is this sprightly country you want?" he demanded, this time with a little rudeness, although he was a fine gentleman.

"I've no mind to have my embroidery or my web interrupted by my husband's brawls at the alehouse, after he has fought his cocks; or my tea-table poisoned by his tobacco, when he has been soaking himself with the chaplain."

"I marvel you don't go to Moorfields, madam, and renounce the world at once," he remarked, with a sneer.

"Nay," answered the poor lady, with something like a sigh, and fingering at one of her knots of ribands, "I may play with my heart or my head—perhaps I have done it already—but I dare not play with my soul."

He told her he would follow her to her destination; she fired again immediately, and called his stanchness an unmannerly, unmanly intrusion. He maintained he would watch over her. She insisted she would have none of his guardianship. He declared he would be ready to receive her commands like her poorest servant. She taunted

him with spoiling poor Roger, and declared that hereafter she would not speak to him—not a single word. He kept the last word, and opened, hypocritically, that she would excuse his presumption for disobeying her orders, and doubting her unheard-of severity. And so back marched the pair to the coach, the gentleman not even thinking it worth his while to resume his task as he marshalled the lady through the lashing, disreputable group on the king's highway, who were yet perfectly polite to the fine gentleman who had taken them into his pay and put himself into their power, and to the fine lady, about whom he was so hugely agog. In spite of herself, her conductor seated the angry lady beside the perplexed Dutton and the tranquil clerical gentleman, so pitiful in his tranquillity—pitiful to the noisy, reckless gentlemen of the road, to the stout stupid graziers, to the slight, sharp students, to the trembling Dutton, to the fine gentleman with the flashing eyes, and to the fine lady with the flushing cheeks.

II.—AN OPEN-AIR SERMON, AND ITS RESULTS.

In the Market-place of Hazelton, on a horse-block which replaced the old cross, stood a man, on an afternoon in June, addressing a noisy rebellious crowd. A well-sized elm rose from the side of the horse-block and shot its branches over the speaker's head, sheltering him from the sun, but not defending him—though he needed defence.

Hazelton was a pretty enough old town, with many gables still fronting the streets, at this point meeting in a square. There was many a broad door and broader window, with tiers of peaked windows in rows above them, and the oddest of little towers, upright on one side and slanting on the other, starting out of the very roofs, and surmounting the line of buildings. It was a town not at all regular or spacious, but great in gardens, on whose walls flourished stone-crop, and over them peeped apple, pear, and plum boughs. Two months hence these plum-boughs would bend, blue, heavy and rich, with dark mellow fruit.

The village had a tributary from its river, intersecting its chequers, and keeping them deliciously cool and fresh, but cutting in most inconveniently at right angles. This rivulet was crossed by every variety of rustic bridge.

The man who stood on that horse-block was evidently a peaceable man by his profession, and a gentleman from his looks and language; but he had chosen an injudicious hour. The "Pipe and Tabor" had sent out its gentlemen, and the scampish "Forge and Bellows" its mechanics and tramps. Masses of bloated and besotted men surrounded the cross. Whether any of the gentlemen of the road, whom he had appointed to this tryst, had taken him at his word, it were hard to say, but the rash individual who ventured to address them against their will and pleasure would have been more likely to have received common courtesy, or common humanity, from a herd of wild cattle than from the audience he now had around him.

It was a seething collection of the refuse of all degrees. The wine stain on vest and cuffs, and the clay soil on smock frock and leather-leggings, were

but emblems of the defilement on the souls within. And on what points did this assured, audacious man attack that foul-mouthed crowd of half-heathen England? He enlarged on the old, old story of "temperance, righteousness, and judgment to come." But they did not hear so patiently as did the Roman governor. They roared and resisted. They even went the length of battering that pale-faced, unarmed, solitary man with the usual worthy weapons—filth, as well as filthy talk, dead cats, brooms, and brick-bats. Bulldogs were hounded upon him, till it seemed as if his blood in very deed would be upon their hands ere they parted. Why, then, did he not attempt a retreat? Or why, if he could not withdraw, did he not climb into the elm-tree? He had to grasp its stem sometimes, as for very life, when a heavy missile caused him to swerve aside, or, grazing his shoulder, nearly threw him off his balance. Why had he come there at all, and why was he not overcome by such a reception? He risked his life thus because he came there for dear life itself—the life that can never die. And he accepted the turmoil as a soldier accepts the wild blaze, shots,

and wounds of a battle field. He was used to such scenes ; they formed his field of usefulness, and honour, and glory.

As the preacher struggled for a hearing, and as scared children were crying, and poor ragged women wringing their hands, a lady, with a gentleman strolling after her, crossed the Market-place. She was known as the London Madam lodging at Goody Dutton's, who spent the days mostly in drinking whey and drying rose leaves ; he, as the London Gentleman living in rooms he paid for like a prince at the "Pipe and Tabor," and passing the time in fishing and playing at bowls. All the town knew there was some mysterious connection between these two in their visit to Hazelton ; all the town knew that if you saw the one elegant idler, the other was certain not to be far distant. A great hue and cry had been set up about them, but not one man or woman had yet detected them in actual communication. The lady was constantly fretting and fuming and fatiguing herself. She wandered here and there, and was always dropping down on banks and benches. The gentleman *doggedly* tracked her footsteps, but usually re-

mained at a respectful distance. She now stopped when she saw the mob, fluttered her fan, hesitated, glanced sharply behind her, and then, with a toss of her head, stationed herself on the outskirts of the crowd among the quietest spectators. The gentleman also stood still, with his hands in his pockets, apparently careless and indifferent.

The lady kept her attention directed towards the preacher until her eyes were riveted upon him with interest, as she listened breathlessly. At length her drooping, yellowing, lily-like face mantled with a glow of satisfaction. The gentleman noticed this sign of healthy interest displayed in her face, and he now strove to catch the broken sentences which had caused it. He at first frowned, bit his lips, and hung his head, as if in some pain and trouble. Was it a spell then? Yes, we may say it was a spiritual spell which arrested and melted that pair of wayward gentlefolks—chance members of this coarse, furious assembly.

A party of men had by this time caught up a felled tree, and were levelling it to thrust it forward into the face of the speaker. "Spit him," "Treat him to See-saw, Margery Daw," "Carry him round

the town on a wooden horse, ha ! ha !” rose a host of rude cries.

“Shame, you boors,” shouted a voice, passionate but clear, amidst those thick, coarse, guttural articulations. “Hands off, you villains ; the stranger wants to do you a benefit, you dirty, malignant curs, and you render cursing for blessing.”

For the first time the preacher looked surprised and touched. Then, after a moment’s pause, he bent forward to his champion with a rare smile on his intellectual but loving face. “Not boors, and villains, and curs, worthy sir,”—so he gently rebuked his generous but hasty ally—“Not boors, and villains, and curs, but mistaken brethren.”

But the fine gentleman did not heed him. Good reason there was, too, for his obliviousness. His stricken heart was thrilling and bounding with delight, because a pair of slender hands were clasped on his arm, and he heard a soft voice whisper in his ear—“That was well, brave Master Lancelot, to stand up for the good clergyman.”

Next moment a peculiar bustle arose in the *thoroughfare*. “Room for Master Mayor,” was

shouted. "Make way for the Mayor, who has himself come out, trusty, zealous man, to clap eyes on the knave, and set him in the town-stocks, or throw him into the town-jail."

"Where is this disturber of the public peace?" called out a voice in high-flown, pompous accents.

The sound issued from a pursed-up mouth, situated, as seemed at first glance, in the centre of a face certainly as ruby as the face of any of its proprietor's subordinates.

The Mayor, in his wide-skirted broadcloth, lawn frills, and puffed-out person, was enthusiastically carried forward to do his office, while at the same time a rush was made to hustle the unlucky, unpopular offender off his temporary platform.

But again the fine gentleman's voice sounded out clearly, but sternly—"Your tongue is tripping, Master Mayor."

Doubtless it was rather an imperious speech to be addressed to a man in authority. The Mayor started and faced round angrily. He scrutinized its author, marked the velvet coat, the lace on the cocked hat, the dainty handkerchief dangling from the flapped pocket, and the finished perfection of

the wig. Master Mayor, as a merchant draper, could of course estimate these articles at their proper value. He boggled in his arrogant orders, rubbed his eyes, and coughed repeatedly ; and finally led the way to the town-hall, considerably crestfallen.

The preacher followed submissively, but showing himself neither disturbed nor dismayed at the clamour around him. As he passed by my lady and the fine gentleman—birds of a different feather from the rest of the flock—Master Fenton removed his hat gravely, and stood with his scented curls uncovered in the afternoon sun.

Again that placid man recognised the unwonted greeting, smiled softly in acknowledgment of it, and said distinctly and earnestly, as he was driven along : “ Howbeit, certain clave unto him and believed ; among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris.”

Poor souls ! they did not know the quotation ; but they felt somehow that it referred to something grand, noble, and self-sacrificing, consistent with the bearing of the man disappearing in that crew. *And they two were even now cleaving unto each*

other as they turned out of the rapidly emptying market-place.

“Shall we go to the Hall, madam,” says Master Lancelot dreamily, “and learn what truth and soberness mean, and discover for ourselves what power lies in those unworldly words?”

“That we will,” replies Mrs. Belinda, with the frankness and decision which in themselves were features of that incongruous, artificial, highly-coloured age. “I trust you entirely, sir, since your heart responds to an impulse of my own.”

And thus it was that the people of Fenton Hall preserved fond remembrances of a paragon of a squire and his lady—fine London folk—who yet married at some quiet country church, and arrived on horseback—he on his saddle, and she on the pillion behind him, like any farmer and his wife; Mistress Dutton, and Roger, and the squire’s own gentleman following ruefully by the carrier’s waggon, because somehow Master Lancelot’s chariot was under repair up in London. And mighty loving and merry, with a touch of seriousness in their mirth, were these two on this journey, and ever afterwards. They abode peacefully at

Fenton Hall, and only went up to the town for a holiday. They pondered and said their prayers, farmed and kept house, sported and span, and called each other Darby and Joan, with a zest which never palled. They feasted, but did not riot ; jested, but did not blaspheme ; were considerate to the well-to-do, and charitable to the poor ; and it was specially noted of them that while they were on friendly terms with their parish rector, they were also very kind to every wandering Methodist.

ON THE STAGE AND OFF THE STAGE.

I.—THE "BEAR" AT BATH.



HE Place was Old Bath, in the days immediately succeeding those of Alexander Pope and William Hogarth, and dove-tailing into those of Horace Walpole and the Wesleys.

The Age was one of rackets and reaction from morning till night, and Bath was the head-quarters of the first—the scene of the pump-room, the raffle, the public breakfast, the junketing at mid-day, the ball at midnight, the play, the ridotto.

The Scene was a private room in the "Bear," when it was crowded with peers, bullies, rooks, highwaymen, leaders of fashion, waiting-women, and stage-stars. The "Bear" was held by great

Mrs. Price, a hostess large, shining, portly—a friendly great woman, too magnificent to be fussy, or mean, or spiteful. The “Bear” looked out on the Parade, with its throngs of beaux—veritable beaux, with Beau Nash at their head—wigged, caned, and snuff-boxed, and belles with trains, borne by black boys, cambric caps and aprons, and abundance of velvet patches. In and out of its yawning doorway strutted fine gentlemen, chaplains, and wits, while grooms, public and private, swarmed round the house. Its broad stairs and low wide corridors, traversed by the more private company, led to sitting-rooms of all degrees panelled with oak or lined with cedar, with worked worsted wonders in the shape of chairs, and China monsters by way of ornaments.

The Person was a handsome woman, attired negligently in what was called a sacque, with a mob-cap. She sat sipping a dish of tea, as sober women will after fatigue or in anticipation of exertion, and making occasional reference to some shabby, well-worn volumes and printed sheets piled up beside her. Her attitude was studious, for days when a chapter of the Bible, a cookery

recipe, a paper by Addison or Dick Steele, or a copy of verses, included all the knowledge after which the gentler sex aspired; her retirement was remarkable at that gay era, and in that gadding neighbourhood; and her morning dress, though it would not have offended a Tabitha Tidy, looked plain among the silvered mazarines and the tippets of pheasants' tails.

She was a woman of about five and twenty; but her beauty, though still in its prime, showed the wear and tear of years. Had it not been that its chief power lay in the intellect and goodness which sat on the capacious but not cloudy brow, and gleamed out of the cordial dark blue eyes, and hovered round the somewhat wide and somewhat lined but never sensual mouth—you would have said this was a faded queen whom the world was mad to worship. As it was, she did look faded this spring afternoon, and occasionally fretted audibly enough as she turned over the leaves of her volumes, and sighed "heigho!" as she looked at her repeater—not quite so common an appendage as the little Geneva story-tellers, though a footpad *carried always a goodly supply*, and a gentleman's

gentleman of very fine prestige would wear a couple, "one in each fob"—and sipped her tea: which, by the way, she drank, not out of one of the diminutive China cups, but out of an old battered, but very shining little silver tankard.

Anon my lady rose and strolled to a back window. She looked across the noisy, crowded stable-yard into the corner of a garden, where a lilac bush was budding into dusty dim purple and a hoary apple-tree blossomed white and pink like a blushing child, away over the green fields to a farmhouse upon a hill, where russet and yellow stacks proved the farmer's command of ready money, or caution in selling. From just such another farmhouse as that on which our bright benevolent woman—even in the dumps—was gazing wistfully, issued Caroline Inchbald, a beauty, and a generous, virtuous woman under great temptations, a friend and rival on equal terms with Amelia Öpie.

But hark! an arrival in the next room: fresh guests—country people of consequence, for they were ushered in by Mrs. Price herself, who received in person their orders for an incongruous meal,

neither dinner nor supper, to recruit them for some gala in which they had the prospect of figuring, to judge from a torrent of exclamations which pierced through a convenient cupboard in the partition.

“Make haste, girls,” in bass tones.

“Eat away, Fiddy,” treble, mimicking the bass.

“Uncle, don’t attempt the game-pie. We’ll be too late, as sure as our heads. Didn’t you hear Mrs. Price say there was a power of company wanting seats; it would be too bad if we lost the sight after all.”

“What, Prissy, worse then Admiral Byng’s defeat, or my spoilt medal?”

“Oh! Uncle Rowland, how can you joke! Now, Fiddy, there’s a dear creature, don’t have anything to say to the cream-tart. What although we’re as hungry as hawks, if we only get a good view to talk about at the Vicarage and Larks’ Hall.”

“There—Prissy, dear, then I’ve done. I’ll just run and shake our myrtle crapes and fresh pinch our stomachers.”

“Hold! no such thing, lasses. I’m not to be left *here* to feed in solitude, and without e’er a

portfolio or picture. You little geese, it is two good hours to the exhibition. Are you to be frizzing, and painting, and lacing, and mincing, and capering for two mortal hours, and your poor country uncle left to spoil his digestion for want of something else to do than eat? Is that your gratitude, when here have I come against my will to introduce you to the wicked, gay world, and spoil your Arcadian simplicity? Don't make faces, Prissy?"

"Oh! Uncle Rowland; you are making base pretences."

"Indeed, sir, I think you are as wild to see the wonders as we are."

But the remonstrance had its effect, for the young ladies evidently sat down again, and, by the clatter of knives and forks, one could judge they condescended to do some justice to the good things provided for their solace, while the conversation went on in more regular order.

The lady in the Nankin sitting-room had decidedly the advantage in this situation, as she did not soliloquize in private, and she heard through the cupboard and the locked door of communi-

cation the chat of her neighbours. They spoke no treason, and they ought to be more prudent if they told secrets: it was a real benefit to a lonely wight, a little irritated in nerve and temper, to be a party to their lively, affectionate, simple intercourse; and, as the truth must be told, the lady in the Nankin sitting-room crossed her hands with a motion of indolent interest and turned her head with an air of listless pleasure, nodding and beating her foot lightly on the floor now and then, in interjection and commentary. She could figure the group perfectly. Two rosy little girls brought into the town for a day and a night's shopping and gadding, as they would call it, under the escort of an indulgent uncle: a bachelor, probably, else madam, his wife, would have been there to keep them in order; and not so very elderly, for the good man was of what was styled a sprightly turn, and though his nieces submitted to his authority, there was a decidedly modified amount of reverence in the way in which they insisted,

“You must comb out your curls, Uncle Rowland.”

“And I'll tie your cravat for you, sir, and make you *quite smart*. We are not to appear abroad

with a country bumpkin or a fright of a student, are we, Prissy?"

And mutual jokes were bandied pretty freely.

"Now, Prissy, are we to see the famous Traveller?"

"No, sir, it is to be the Virtuoso, with the mock copper coins."

"Bronze, child, bronze."

"We're to have nobody in particular, only Lady Betty," chimed in the more girlish voice. "The company, the other gentlefolks, will be quite sufficient besides."

"And Fiddy will scream when the blunderbusses are fired. Shall we take the precaution of putting cotton in her ears beforehand?" derided the man.

Then the single lady fixed further, that Prissy (Mistress Priscilla, doubtless, in company down in Somersetshire) was the cleverest and most forward, and that Fiddy (Mistress Fidelia) was the shyest and, perhaps, the prettiest, for she was clearly Uncle Rowland's favourite. But then, for all her rosy cheeks, poor child! she was delicate, since there was a constant cry from the conductor of the party, "Fiddy, you vain doll, remember your

mantle; madam is not here to wrap you up, nor Granny."

"Oh, sir! we've lots of scarfs and shawls, all for Fiddy; and she is to tie on her Iris hood against the draughts."

"What! one of the poppies and bluebells that Will Honeycomb admired? She'll beat you, Prissy, out and out. I would sicken and bear her company."

"I wonder to hear you, sir. I can tell you, Granny would not coddle me so. Granny is always preaching of hardening weakness."

"Ah, the old mother is no milksop!"

There, was she not right? Had she not full hints of the history of the Vicarage and madam its mistress, the mother of these two little girls; and of the parish priest her husband, their father—the younger brother of the tolerably educated squire yonder, with his Larks' Hall; and of Granny, who kept house there still for her elder son, where she had once reigned queen paramount in the hearty days of her homely goodman. It was a scroll fairly unfolded, and perfectly legible to the experienced woman.

“Uncle Rowland,” prefaced the soft voice, more quietly, “do you really think the gay world of the town so much more vicious than the sober world of the country?”

“Why, no, my dear,” answered the manly voice, now graver, and with a little sadness in its ring, “ignorance is not innocence, and depravity is vastly more general than any mode. Nevertheless, there are customs of which I would greatly prefer Prissy and Fiddy to remain unaware, like their mother before them.”

“But Granny lived in the great world, and there is not one of us like Granny.”

“The risk is too great, child; the fire is wondrous strong, though the pure gold be sometimes refined in the process—as your father would preach.”

“And, sir, this Mistress Lumley, or Lady Betty, as they called her downstairs, is as virtuous as she is clever.”

“You may depend upon that, Miss, or you had not come to Bath to see her play. They term the poor soul Lady Betty because she has turned on her heel from the worthless London sparks, and taught them to keep their distance.”

“Uncle Rowland, I don’t think you heartily sympathize with charming Lady Betty.”

“Tut! child, I have not seen her. You would not have me captivated ere I ever set eyes on my enslaver? But, to speak honestly, little Fiddy, I own I have no great leaning to actresses and authoresses. There are perils enough in a woman’s natural course without her challenging the extremes of a fictitious career. More than that, Fiddy, I have not much faith in the passion that is ranted to the public; even if it were always a creditable passion. Those who are sorely hurt don’t bawl, child: deep streams are still.”

“I will play to him,” the lady of the Nankin sitting-room says to herself, her lips parting with a slight smile, and her colour rising at the same time. Your true woman is easily pained, and, the more fully furnished, the more finely skilled, she is all the more susceptible to blame as to praise, and so on that account the less qualified for public life. There was many a strong enough argument against the stage and the desk which Master Rowland might have used instead of his *weak one*.

Lady Betty, in that bubbling, frothing, steaming London—Mistress Lumley in the provinces—was a young actress of great repute and good character, who had compelled success, like Mrs. Siddons after her, and reigned for several seasons, and still her fame was paramount and her respectability unquestioned. In those very dissipated days of Queen Anne and the early Georges, the broad prejudices which darken the stage were light in tint and slender in force. The great world was tumultuous, giddy, reckless, with innumerable victims falling suddenly into its yawning chasms, like the figures from the bridge in Mirza's vision; and the theatre was not a more exposed sphere than many another, and that made all the difference in the world. Very few save the strictest Methodists condemned it, when Henry Brooke wrote for it, and Dr. Johnson stood with his hands behind his back in the green room.

Mrs. Betty Lumley, tall, comely, high-principled, warm-hearted, and ingenuous, was come of yeomen ancestors. She did not see a play in a barn and run away after the drama, like Caroline Inchbald; but on the death of her father and mother, she

went up with an elder sister and young brother to London to seek for an employment and a livelihood. Encountering some person of dramatic pursuits—manager, stage-painter, ticket-taker, or the like, or the wife of one or other—she was recommended to the stage. She was supported in the idea by all her connections, for then no one questioned the perfect respectability of the profession. She studied hard in new, though not uncongenial fields; she ventured; she tried again and again, with the “modest but indomitable pluck” of genius, and she at last won a position and a prospect of independence. In all this nobody blamed her: on the contrary, the magnates of the hour—kings, councillors, bishops—awarded her great credit for her parts, her industry, her integrity, her honour.

Not a lady of quality in London was more respected and admired, rightly or wrongly, than Mistress Betty. At the same time it is possible that, having reached the goal, could she have turned back and begun her walk anew, she would have hesitated before following this thorny path. It was a thorny path, for all its applause and success; nay on account of them: even with a good woman like Mistress

Betty it required all her sincerity, her sobriety, and, according to the prevailing standard, her religion, to deliver her from imminent danger. Moreover, with the attainment of the object, had come the bitter drops which qualified the cup. Her plain, fond, innocent sister was in her grave; and so within the last two years was the young brother, for whom her interest had procured a post of some importance in the Colonies, whence he bequeathed to Mistress Betty, his dear distinguished sister, his little savings. She struggled to be resigned, and was not only weary but tempted to grasp at material rewards. This was the turning-point of her life. She would be virtuous to the last. Her honest, clear character revolted at vice; but she might harden, grow greedy of power, become imperious and arrogant. For, remember, I do not say that Mistress Betty had contracted no contamination. No, no; she had suffered from her selfish fits, her vain fits, her malicious fits—she had experienced her hours of boldness and levity—she had made her own way to eminence—she had struggled with unscrupulous rivals—she had heard much which we would have wished her

not to have heard—she had been a member of that wild, ultra fine, coarse, scandalous society: but as we find saints in strange company sometimes, so the cordial, faithful, generous woman remained with only a slight coating of affectation and worldliness, thirst for praise, desire after excitement, habit of command.

“I’ll play to this horrid country justice,” whispers Mistress Betty, quite roused, and looking animated and brilliant already. “I hear by the gentleness of his voice, when he speaks of the sins and sorrows of mankind, and when he addresses his little girl, that the fellow has a heart; but he gave me no quarter, and he shall receive none in return. I’ll conquer him. To come within sight and sound of the boards with his muddy boots and his snarls, spoiling the enjoyment of the lasses!”

Very true, Mistress Betty, it was neither very wise nor very gallant; but you ought to remember that the most loyal prejudices are sometimes as loyally abandoned.

II.—LADY BETTY ON THE STAGE.

The principal theatre of the queen of watering-places in her palmy days was filling fast, as it had done for the last two nights. Other attractions lost their power. Ombre, basset, hazard, lansquenet, loo, spread their cards and counters in vain for crafty or foolhardy fingers. The master of the ceremonies found his services at a discount; no troops of maidens, no hosts of squires, answered to his appeal; no double sets were forming to the inspiring strains of "Nancy Dawson." The worthy, charming, gifted Lady Betty had come down for three nights to improve, entertain, and enrapture, and this being her last night the theatre constituted the only orbit in which the planets would revolve.

The world was here in full-blown variety; sublime, languid peers, needy placemen, hilarious foxhunters, brave tradesmen, aspiring mechanics, poor good-for-nothings; sober housewives, whose thoughts were still of their husbands' shirt-fronts and their hasty-puddings, and who never dreamt that they were impugning their sobriety by attending a play; and above all, fine ladies armed with

their fans and their essences. As a whole, the audience was in a vastly respectful attitude—the gentlemen tapping their snuff-boxes meditatively, and desisting in a great measure from their loud laughter, their bets, their cursing and swearing; the ladies only whispering behind their handkerchiefs, and moving to cause their diamonds to sparkle, all in acknowledgment of the vicinity of the fair and potent Lady Betty.

The play was *Venice Preserved*, and Lady Betty entered in an early scene. Truly a fine woman—not so lovely as Anne Oldfield, not so superb as Sarah Siddons; but with a frank, fair, womanly presence—bright, genial, quick, passionate through the distress of Belvidera, the repudiated daughter and beggared wife.

Dressed in the English fashion under the Georges, walked the maiden reared in the air blowing off the lagoons within the shadow of the grim lion of St. Mark, to such sentimental accompaniments as the dipping oar and the gondolier, and finished off with the peculiar whims of Betty Lumley. She wore a fair, flowered brocade, for which William Hogarth might have designed the

pattern and afterwards prosecuted for payment the unconscionable weaver; a snow-white lace kerchief was crossed over her bosom and reached even to her shapely chin, where it met the little black velvet collar with its pearl sprig; her brown hair (which had shown rather thin, rolled up beneath her mob-cap) was shaken out and gathered in rich bows with other pearl sprigs on the top of her head; her cheeks showed slightly hollow, but were so fresh, so modest, so cool in their unpainted paleness, and on the smallest provocation acquired the purest sea-shell pink which it would have been a sin and a shame to eclipse with staring paint; the contour, a little sharper than it had once been, was only rendered more delicate by the defect, and so sweet yet—so very sweet; her beautiful arms were bare to the elbow, but shaded with falls of cobweb lace; and in one hand, poised daintily between two fingers, she held a natural flower, a bunch of common rural cowslips. At this period of the year such an appendage under any other touch would have been formal as the Miss Flamborough's oranges, but it was graceful in this woman's slight clasp.

“Enchanting creature!” “Fine woman!” “Ot-ay’s devoted wife to the life!” murmured the company, in a flutter of genuine admiration—forgetting themselves, these Sir Plumes and Belindas, once in a way.

“I do hope the poor soul will not be deserted and undone—she’s so easy to serve—and all Bath, and, for that matter, Lon’on too, as I believe, at her feet!” says Mrs. Price, emphatically, to young Redlicot, whom she is patronizing for one night; because he knows somewhat of plays and players; and who, in spite of his allegiance to swimming, empering Clarissa, would give a fortune to paint that pose. Belvidera need fear no lolling, no sneering, no snapping at her little peculiarities this night.

As she came on, “kind, good, and tender,” lolling poor distracted, misguided Jaffier, in his humiliation, that she joyed more in him than did his mother, Lady Betty darted a sharp, searching glance through the boxes. Ah! yonder they were! The little girls the parson’s daughters, with their uncle the squire, fault-finding, but honourable. Two round-faced, eager, happy girls,

intent upon the play, and the great London star, beautiful, bewitching Lady Betty, who is now looking at them—yes, actually staring them full in the face with her deep, melting, blue eyes, while she reassures her cowardly husband. How dared uncle Rowland disparage her?

There was uncle Rowland, younger than Lady Betty had taken him for—not more than five-and-forty—his coat trimmed with silver lace, a little old-fashioned, and even a little shabby in such company, his Mechlin tie rather out of date and already disordered, and his cocked-hat crushed below his arm. His face is bluff and ruddy among his pinched and sallow brethren: that of a big English gentleman, who hunted, shot, or fished, or walked after his whistling ploughman every morning, and on occasions daringly dashed in amongst the poachers by the palings of his park or paddock on summer evenings; yet whose hands were reasonably white and flexible, as if they handled other things than guns and fishing-rods, and whose eyes, at once clear and meditative, had studied more than the spire of his brother's church and the village street, more than quiet

country towns, and loud watering-places, and deep metropolises.

Master Rowland had no family ties beyond the Vicarage; and was in no hurry to marry or settle, as the phrase went; though he was settled long ago, and might have married once a year, without any impediment from old madam, as Mistress Betty would have been swift to suppose. He perfectly approved of Mr. Spectator's standard of virtue—"Miss Liddy can dance a jig, raise a pasty, write a good hand, keep an accompt, give a reasonable answer, and do as she is bid;" but then, it only made him yawn. The man was sinking down into an active-bodied, half-learned, half-facetious bachelor. He was mentally cropping dry and solid food contentedly, and, at the same time, he was a bit of a humourist. He loved his little Prissy and Fiddy, as dear god-daughters, whom he had spoilt as children, and whom he was determined to present with portions when he presided at their wedding dinners; but he had no mind to take any of their fellows, for better for worse, as his companion, till death did them part.

Then Lady Betty stepped upon the stage at

Bath, and, before a multitude of frivolous and simple, or gross and depraved spectators, incapable of comprehending her, she played to the manly, modestly intellectual squire.

Master Rowland woke up, looked his fill, as open-mouthed as the rest, and while he did so, his system received a shock. Lady Betty was revenged to an extent she had not foreseen.

The noble woman went with her whole soul into the sorrows of the dark-eyed, brown-faced sister whom Titian might have painted, and made them accord with her fair English love of justice, her blue-eyed devotion to her husband, her Saxon fearlessness and faith in the hour of danger; only she did look strange and foreign when, in place of lying prostrate in submission and rising in chaste, meek patience to rear her orphan son, she writhed like a Constance in agony, and died more speedily from her despair than Jaffier by the dagger which on the scaffold freed Pierre. The assembly rose in whole rows, and sobbed and swooned. Mrs. Prissy and Mrs. Fiddy cried in delicious abandonment: Master Rowland sat motionless.

“ I declare I had forgotten the justice,” reflects Lady Betty, resting behind the scenes. “ I do believe I am that poor Belvidera for the last half-hour. I meant to bring the man to tears. His blooming face was as white as a sheet—poor, dear, good man, I hope he’s none the worse of it.”

Master Rowland knows full well that she is Mistress Betty Lumley the great London actress, not Belvidera the Venetian senator’s daughter; but he will never again turn from the chill of his stone-arched hall, where his fingers have grown benumbed riveting a piece of armour or copying an epitaph or an epigram, or linger under his mighty oak-tree, or advise with his poor tenants, or worship in church, without the sickening sense of a dull blank in his heart and home.

III.—MISTRESS BETTY BECOMES NURSE.

Bath was sleeping as soundly as if it had been a quaker town: any sounds of riot were scattered and subdued. The dowager did not count her gains as she clutched them, while borne along *the street by the glare of the dropping flambeaux.*

Her son, who, like the young Duke of Marlborough and his brother peer, carried no meaner change than golden guineas, did not clink them as he tossed them to the chairmen fighting for the prize. The "Bear" was reasonably still for a great public-house with twos and threes of travellers departing at all hours, as waiters and hostlers stirred on their behalf, horses trotted out from adjoining stables, and circles of chariots suffered displacement—all in addition to the distinct and fervent sensation of the night coach.

Suddenly a noise and flurry arose in the grey light and its general repose. Accents of terror and anxiety are heard, and a movement of pity and distress rises and grows in the establishment. A young girl is attacked by violent illness—a life in its spring-time is threatened with sudden extinction; friends at hand are seeking remedies and bewailing the calamity—friends at a distance, all unconscious, are mentioned with subdued voices and averted eyes.

Mrs. Price was wiping her eyes and carrying up restoratives with her own hands. "'Twas Mistress Fiddy, whom she had known from a child;

the niece of Master Rowland, who had always supported the house; and madam, her mother, away at the Vicarage, and the dear child, so good and quiet."

"I will come, my good Mrs. Price. My sister had these fainting fits; I'm used to them. I'll revive the child: the poor child, I am sure she'll not be offended at the liberty. Pooh! I can sit up as well as sleep after playing. Dear! dear! Many a night I was happy to sit up with Deb," pleaded an urgent, benevolent voice, waxing plaintive towards the conclusion of the speech.

"Indeed you are too gracious, my lady—I mean madam," protested the perplexed, overwhelmed Mrs. Price; "but I dare not venture without Master Rowland's consent: he will do everything himself, issue his orders even, although Dr. Fulford's been upstairs lending his advice these ten minutes."

"A fudge for doctors when there's a helpful woman at hand, Mrs. Price? Convey my message to the squire; inform him that I've had experience—mind, experience—and am a full-grown, reasonable woman, and not a fine lady. I know the

poor little sister will be shaking like a leaf, and frightening the darling; and you are stiff in the joints yourself, Mrs. Price, and a little overcome. I'm just the person, so let me in!"

Master Rowland, without his coat (for though he had an orderly turn of his own, he was not a methodical enough man to travel with a gown and slippers in his valise), was labouring to recover his niece; Mistress Prissy, with her cloak huddled round her, was making magnanimous efforts to aid her uncle; while the poor little sufferer—guileless, affectionate Mistress Fiddy—lay pale, faint, and chill, with life flickering beneath her half-closed eyelids and in the gushes of her fitful breath. Master Rowland's trouble rendered him outwardly cold and hard, as it does some men; yet Mistress Fiddy's closing eyes turned trustfully to him, and her weak fingers clung tightly to his strong hand.

"No, no; the fewer onlookers the better. What would a stranger do here, Mrs. Price?" he inquired angrily, remembering, with a pang, that certain new, unaccountable, engrossing emotions had quite banished Fiddy from his thoughts

and notice, when he might have detected the signs of approaching illness, met them and vanquished them before their climax.

“Bid him speak a word with me, Mrs. Price: a gentleman cannot refuse. I have reasons which will excuse my importunity,” reiterated that sympathetic voice.

He walked out doggedly, and never once lifted his eyes. “Madam, I am your servant; but we do not need your help: my niece would be scared by the presence of a stranger. Reserve your charity ——” “for the poor” he was about to add; but she put her frank hand upon his arm, and said, “Your worship, I believe I could nurse the young lady better than anybody: I have seen my dear sister affected, as I judge, similarly. Do not stand on ceremony, sir, and deprive a poor girl of a benefit which Providence has sent her, if you would not regret it. I beg your pardon, but do let me succour her.”

He looked up. There she stood in her white wrapping-gown and cap, ready prepared for her patient; so appropriate-looking in dress and face, with her broad forehead full of thought, and her

cheek flushed with feeling; an able tender woman in her prime, endeavouring to do Christian offices, longing to pour balm into gaping, smarting wounds, imploring to be allowed to fulfil her mission. He bowed, and stood aside; she curtsied, and passed in. He heard her voice the next moment, low, but perfectly audible, cheerful and pleasant, addressing Mistress Prissy. "My dear madam, your uncle has permitted me to count myself a mature friend, like madam your mother; and after this introduction you will excuse me for taking care of you. Doctor, what drops do you favour? You have them there; if you please I'll offer them: I've administered them before." She spoke to the doctor very courteously; perhaps remarking that he was young and somewhat agitated. "Mayn't I chafe Mistress Fiddy's hands, doctor? You're better, my dear?"

Mistress Fiddy's head was on her arm; her eyes were raised to her nurse's face wonderingly but complacently, and, though quite conscious, Mistress Fiddy involuntarily sighed out "mother." Very motherly was the elder woman's assurance: "Yes, my dear, I'll serve as madam your mother, in her ab-

sence, till madam herself comes; and she'll laugh at our confusion and clumsiness, I warrant."

Mistress Fiddy smiled a little smile herself. Nature was reacting in its own redemption; the necessary stimulus was obtained, and the little lass was in a fair way of recovery.

But Mistress Betty did not leave off her cares; she elected herself mistress of the sick room—for she reigned there as everywhere else. She dismissed shivering, tearful, grateful Prissy with a hug, and a whispered promise that her dear sister Fiddy would be as lively as a grig in the morning; got rid of the doctor and Mrs. Price, and all but routed Master Rowland, succeeding in driving him as far as the next room.

How light her foot was—light as her fingers were nimble; how cleverly she shaded the sick girl from the light, without depriving her of air! How resigned Fiddy was to be consigned to her! how quickly and entirely the child had confided in her; she had hailed her as another mother! Mistress Betty was putting the chamber to rights, in defiance of all the chamber-maids of the "Bear;" she was concocting some refreshing drink, for

which Mrs. Price had supplied the materials, over the fire, which she had ordered in case of mould and damp, even in the well-seasoned "Bear." Once she began to sing softly what might have been a cradle-song, but stopped short, as if fearing to disturb Fiddy, and composed herself to perfect stillness. Then Master Rowland heard Mistress Fiddy question Mistress Betty in her weak, timid voice, on Fiddy's own concerns. "You said you had seen these fits before, madam? May I be so bold as to ask did the sufferer recover?"

There was a moment's silence. "It was my sister, Fiddy: she was much older than I. She had a complication of diseases, besides being liable to swoons all her life. My dear, she died, as we must all die when our time comes; and may we all be as well prepared as was Deb! In the meantime we are in God's hands. I have been taken with fainting fits myself, Fiddy, ere now. I think they are in my constitution, but they are not called out yet, and I believe they will be kept under; as, I fully trust, country air, and exercise, and early hours, will conquer yours."

“And you will take great care of yourself, and go into the country sometimes, dear Mistress Betty,” pleaded the girl fondly, forgetting herself.

Mistress Betty laughed, and turned the conversation, and finally read her patient to sleep with the Morning Lesson, given softly and reverently, as good Bishop Ken himself might have done it.

The poor squire was a discomfited, disordered Sir Roger. He could not cope with this fine woman; and then it came home to him imperatively that he was precisely in that haggard, unbecoming state of looks and costume significantly expressed in those days by the powder being out of a man's hair and his frills rumped. So he absented himself for an hour, and returned freshened by a plunge in the river and a puff in his wig. But, alas! he found that Mistress Betty, without quitting Mistress Fiddy's bedchamber, and by the mere sleight of hand of tying on a worked apron with vine clusters and leaves and tendrils all in purple and green floss silks, pinning a pink bow under her mob-cap, and sticking in her bosom a bunch of dewy ponceau polyanthuses, *had beat him most completely.*

Mistress Fiddy was, as Mistress Betty had predicted, so far re-established that she could breakfast with the party and talk of riding home later in the day; though wan yet, like one of those roses with a faint colour and a fleeting odour in their earliest bud. And Mistress Betty breakfasted with the Parnells, and was such company as the little girls had never encountered before; nor for that matter their uncle before them, though he kept his discovery a profound secret. It was not so pleasant in one sense, and yet in another it made him feel like a king.

This was Mistress Betty's last day in Bath, and she was to travel up to Town in the train of my Lord and Lady Salop, by easy stages and long halts; otherwise she must have hired servants, or carried pistols, and been prepared to use them, in the mail. Fortunately the Salops' chariots and gigs did not start till the afternoon, so that Mistress Betty had the morning to spend with her new friends, and she was delighted to bestow it on them; though my Lord and Lady and their satellites, were perpetually sending lacqueys with compliments, conveniences, and little offerings to

court Mistress Betty—the star in the plenitude of her lustre, who might emulate Polly Peacham, and be led to the altar by another enslaved Duke of Bolton.

How pleasant Mistress Betty was with the girls! Upon the whole, she slighted “the Justice,” as she had dubbed him. She saw with her quick eyes that he was something superior; but then she saw many men quite as well-looking, well-endowed, well-mannered, and with as fair intellects, and more highly cultivated than he.

But she did not often find a pair of unsophisticated little girls won to her by her frankness and kindness, and dazzled by her goodness and greatness. How she awoke Fiddy’s laugh with the Chit-Chat Club and the Silence Stakes. What harmless, diverting stories she told them of high life—how she had danced at Ranelagh, sailed upon the Thames, eaten her bun at Chelsea, mounted one of the eight hundred favours which cost a guinea a piece when Lady Die became a countess, and called upon Lady Peter-sham, in her deepest mourning, when she sat in her *state-bed* enveloped in crape, with her children

and grandchildren in a row at her feet! And then she told that she was born in a farmhouse like that on the hill, and would like to know if they roasted groats and played at shovelboard there still; and ended by showing them her little silver tankard, which her godfather the jolly miller had given her, and out of which her elder sister, who had never taken kindly to tea, had drunk her ale and her aniseed water. And Fiddy and Prissy had each a draught of milk out of it, to boast of for the rest of their lives, as if they had sipped caudle out of the caudle-cup at a royal heir's christening.

Mistress Betty made the girls talk, too—of their garden, the old parish clerk, the housekeeper at Larks' Hall, granny, madam, the vicar, and, to his face, of Uncle Rowland, his horses and colts, his cows and calves, his pictures and cabinets. They spoke also of Fox-holes, of Letty and Grizel, of Sedley and Bearwood, and Dick Ashbridge—at whose name Prissy laughed saucily, and Fiddy bit her lips and frowned as fiercely as she was able. With what penetration Mistress Betty read their connections, and how blithely and tenderly she commented upon them!

Mistress Betty promised to send her young friends sets of silk for their embroidery (and kept her word); she presented Prissy with her enamel snuff-box, bearing an exact representation of that ugly building of St. James's; and Fiddy with her 'equipage'—scissors, tablets, and all, chased and wreathed with tiny pastorals, shepherds reclining and piping on sylvan banks, and shepherds and shepherdesses dancing on velvet lawns.

Mistress Betty kissed the girls at parting, and wished them health, peace, and good husbands; she held out her hand to Master Rowland, who took it with a crimson cheek, and raised it to his lips: pshaw! she never once looked at him.

The poor bachelor squire drove off, but for his manhood, groaning inwardly. Lady Betty had acted, and caught not only her share of Master Rowland's ticket, to which she was fairly entitled, but the cream of his fancy and the core of his heart; with which she had no manner of business, any more than with the State Papers and the Coronation-jewels.

IV.—MASTER ROWLAND GOES UP TO LONDON.

In the green-room of one of the great London theatres—David Garrick's, perhaps—the stage company and their friends were waiting the call-boy and the rising of the curtain.

As strange boards as any—as broad contrasts. Here a king, with his crown cast down; there a beggar, with his wallet laid aside. But kings and beggars are not affording the glaring discrepancies of Hogarth's "Olympus in a Barn," but suggesting and preserving the distinctions far below the buskins, the breastplate, the sandals, the symars. Here are heroes, with the heroism only skin deep; and peers, like their graces of Bolton and Wharton, with less of the lofty, self-denying graces and the ancient chivalry, than the most grovelling of ploughmen.

Among the crowd, Lady Betty is biding her time, very *nonchalant*, and a little solitary in her state. Ladies who are independent, exclusive, and inflexible, however admired and respected, are generally left to enjoy their own opinions unmolested and at their leisure, whether behind the stage curtain or elsewhere.

Just then a country gentleman, whose murrey coat has a certain country cut, while his complexion breathes of hay-fields and hedge sides, is introduced, gazes round, and steps up to her. Mistress Betty cries out, "La!"—an exclamation not a whit vulgar in her day—"the Justice!" And she holds forth both her hands. "How are dear Mistress Prissy and Mistress Fiddy? Have you come up to town for any time, sir? I wish prosperity to your business."

He has not held such kind, unaffected, friendly hands since they parted; he has only once before held a hand that could have led a Jaffier to confess his conspiracy—that could have clung to a crushed man, and striven to raise him when calamity, like a whirlwind, cast him down.

The squire is sensibly moved, and Mistress Betty vindicates her womanliness by jumping at a conclusion and settling in her own mind that his brain is addled with this great London—its politicians, its mohawks, its beggars in Axe Lane, its rich tradesmen in Cranbourne Alley, its people of quality, fashion, and taste in their villas at *Twickenham*.

He asks if she is on in Belvidera, and when he hears that it is another actress's benefit, and that she has only consented to appear in a secondary part in a comedy of Sir John's, who is now a great castle-builder, he does not trouble himself to enter a box; at which she is half flattered, half perplexed. He waits, hot and excited, until her short service is over. He will not call upon her at her lodgings, because, in his delicacy, he has so keen a remembrance of her exposed position.

In the corner behind the curtain, bounded by the refreshment table, and filled with the prompter's monotonous drawl,—far, far from his barley ripe for the mowing, his boxwood peacocks, his grey-haired Hal and his buxom milkmaids; far from old madam, the pedantic, formal vicar, young madam, brisk, hot, and genial, and his old charmers Prissy and Fiddy,—the squire told his tale of true love. The man threw down the costs and besought Mistress Betty Lumley, Lady Betty, to renounce the stage, forsake fame, quit studies, rehearsals, opening-nights, and concluding curtseys amidst the cheers of thousands, to go down with him to rural Larks' Hall, to grow younger, happier, and better

every day, and die like Lady Loudon in her hundredth year, universally regretted—above all, to fill up the gulf which had yawned in the marketplace of his existence since that night at Bath.

It was a primitive proceeding. Lady Betty was amazed at the man's assurance, simplicity, and loyalty. He spoke plainly—almost bluntly—but very forcibly. It was no slight or passing passion which had brought the squire, a gentleman of a score and more of honourable descents, to seek such an audience-chamber to sue a pasteboard queen. It was no weak love which had dislodged him from his old resting-place, and pitched him to this dreary distance.

Mistress Betty was taken "all in a heap;" she had heard many a love-tale, but never one with so manly a note. Shrewd, sensitive Mistress Betty was bewildered and confounded, and in her hurry she made a capital blunder. She dismissed him summarily, saw how white he grew, and heard how he stopped to ask if there were no possible alternative, no period of probation to endure, no achievement to be performed by him. She waved him off the *faster because she became affrighted at his humi-*

lity ; and got away in her chair, and wrung her hands, and wept all night in the long summer twilight, and sat pensive and sick for many days.

In time, Mistress Betty resumed her profession ; but she was unusually languid : she played to disappointed houses, and cherished always, with more romance, the shade of the brave, trustful, Somersetshire squire and antiquary. Suddenly she adopted the resolution of retiring from the stage in the summer of her popularity, and living on her savings and her poor young brother's bequest. Her tastes were simple ; why should she toil to provide herself with luxuries ? She had no one now for whose old age she could furnish ease, or for the aims and accidents of whose rising station she need lay by welcome stores ; she had not even a nephew or niece to tease her. She would not wear out the talents a generous man had admired on a mass of knaves and villains, coxcombs and butterflies ; she would not expose her poor mind and heart to further deterioration. She would fly from the danger ; she would retire, and board with her cousin Ward, and help her with a little addition to her limited income, and a spare hand in her small

family; and she would jog-trot onwards for the rest of her life, so that when she came to die, Mistress Prissy and Mistress Fiddy would have no cause to be ashamed that so inoffensive, inconspicuous, respectable a person had once been asked to stand to them in the dignified relation of aunt. The public vehemently combated Mrs. Betty's verdict, in vain; they were forced to lament during twice nine days their vanished favourite, who had levanted so unceremoniously beyond the reach of their good graces.

V.—MISTRESS BETTY TRAVELS DOWN INTO
SOMERSETSHIRE.

A formal but friendly letter came to Mistress Betty, when her life was one of long dusty exertion, and her heart was very thirsty and parched. The shabby-genteel world and the tradesman's life, unless in exceptional cases of great wealth, were different things a hundred and fifty years ago from what they are now. The villas at Twickenham, the rural retreats, the gardens, the grottos, the books, the harpsichords, the water-colour drawings,

belonged to the quality, or to the literary lions : to Lady Mary or Pope, Horace Walpole or his young friends the Berrys. The half-pay officer's widow, the orphan of the bankrupt in the South Sea business, the wife and family of the moderately flourishing haberdasher, or coach-builder, or upholsterer—the tobacconist rose far above the general level—were cooped up in the city dwellings, and confined to gossip, fine clothes, and good eating if they could afford them. A walk in the City Gardens, a trip to Richmond Hill, and the shows, were their pastimes, and Mr. Steele's "Christian Hero," "An Advice to a Daughter," and De Foe's "History of the Plague," were their mental delectation.

But Mistress Betty had the soul of a martyr; she had resigned herself to sinking down into the star of cousin Ward's set, who went on holidays to the play—mostly honest, fat and fatuous, or jaunty and egotistical folk, who admired the scenery and the dresses, but could no more have made a play to themselves than they could have drawn the cartoons. She helped cousin Ward, not only with her purse, but with a kinswoman's concern in her

and hers: she assisted to wash and dress the children of a morning ; she took a turn at cooking in the middle of the day; she helped to detain Master Ward at the tea-table, and to keep his wig and knee-buckles from too early an appearance and too thorough a soaking of his self-conceit and wilfulness at his tavern; and she heard the lads their lessons, while she darned their frills before supper.

Then arrived the summons, over which Mistress Betty, a little worn by voluntary adversity, shed “a power” of joyful tears. To travel down into Somersetshire, and stroll among the grass in the meadows, and the gorse on the commons, which she had not seen for twelve months ; to feed the calves, and milk the cows, and gather the eggs, and ride Dapple, and tie up the woodbine, and eat syllabub in a bower; to present “great frieze coats” and “riding-hoods” to a dozen of the poorest old men and women in the parish; to hear prayers in a little gray church, through whose open windows ivy nodded, and before whose doors trees arched in vistas; to see her sweet little Prissy and Fiddy, who *had taken such a fancy to her*, and the vicar,

and madam, and granny, and find them all perfectly agreeable, and not slighting her or doubting her because she had been a woman of fashion and an actress; and Master Rowland well disposed of elsewhere; Larks' Hall deserted by its master—the brave, generous, enamoured squire—heigho! Mistress Betty, for all her candour, good humour, and cordiality, had her decent pride, and would not have thrown herself at any man's head.

Somersetshire, in spite of Bath, was as antediluvian a hundred and fifty years ago as the lanes and coombes of Devonshire. Larks' Hall, Foxholes, Bearwood, the Vicarage of Mosely, and their outlying acquaintances, their yeomen and their labourers, lived as old-fashioned and hearty a life as if the battle of Sedgemoor had never been fought.

Down in Somersetshire, among its orchards, nutteries, and blackberry thickets, poor little Mistress Fiddy was drooping, as girls would pine sometimes, even in the days of Will Shakspeare, ere cloth-yard shafts were abolished from merry England, when there were still mayings among the hyacinths, and milkmaids' dances under the thorns, and mumming

when the snow fell. And Dick Ashbridge shot and fished in the most disconsolate abandonment, though the girl yet ran past him "like a ghost" when the beetle and bat were abroad, and he was still mooning about the vicarage meadows.

Neither of them knew for certain, and nobody could predict exactly, that she would live to wed Dick, bear him children, and leave him a sorrowful widower, whose heart was chastened—not torn. No; nor could the good folk in Somersetshire understand how closely Lady Betty and little Fiddy were bound up together, and how little Fiddy was to return Lady Betty's kindness, in the days when the little girl should be the teacher, and the fine woman the scholar, and the lesson to be learnt came from regions beyond the stars.

In the meantime, Fiddy was a sick, capricious, caressed darling in a cambric cap and silk shawl, on whom fond friends were waiting lovingly : whom nobody in the world, not even the doctor, the parish clerk, or the housekeeper at Larks' Hall, dreamt of subjecting to the wholesome medicine of *contradiction*—unless it might be Granny, when

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she came in with her staff in her hand. She would laugh at their excess of care, and order them to leave off spoiling that child: but even Granny herself would let fall a tear from her dim eyes when she read the register of the child's age in the family Bible.

“Ah!” sighs whimsical little Mistress Fiddy, “if only Lady Betty were here—great, good, kind, clever, funny, beautiful Lady Betty—who cured me that night at Bath, papa and mamma, I would be well again. She knows the complaint; she has had it herself; and her face is so cheering, her wit so enlivening, and she reads the lessons so solemnly and sweetly. O mamma! send for Mistress Betty; she will come at once: she does not play now; the prints say so. She will be the better of the country air too. Send for Mistress Betty to Mosely.”

Madam was in a difficulty. An actress at the vicarage! And Master Rowland had been so rash. He had dropped hints, which, along with his hurried visit to London, had instilled dim, dark suspicions into the minds of his appalled relations of the whirlpool he had just coasted, they knew

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not how: they could not believe the only plain, palpable solution of the fact. And Granny had inveighed against women of fashion and all public characters, ever since Uncle Rowland took that jaunt to town, whence he returned so glum and dogged. But then, again, how could the mother deny her ailing Fiddy? And this brilliant Mistress Betty from the gay world might possess some talisman unguessed by the quiet folks at home. Little Fiddy had no real disease, no settled pain: she only wanted change, pleasant company, and diversion, and would be plump and strong again in no time. And Mistress Betty had retired from the stage now; she was no longer a marked person: she might pass anywhere as Mistress Lumley, who had acted with success and celebrity, and withdrawn at the proper moment, with the greatest dignity and discretion. And Master Rowland was arranging his affairs to make the grand tour in the prime of life: his absence would clear away a monstrous objection. What would the Vicar say? What would Granny say?

The Vicar ruled his parish, and lectured in the church; but in the parsonage he thought very much

as madam did, and was only posed when old madam and young madam pulled him different ways.

And Granny? Why, to madam's wonder, Granny required no wheedling, but—apprised of the deliberation, by the little minx Prissy, who in Fiddy's illness attended on Granny—she sent for madam before madam even knew that the proposal had been so much as mooted to her, and struck her stick on the ground in her determined way, and insisted that Mistress Betty should be writ for forthwith, and placed at the head of the child's society. Granny, who had soundly rated fine ladies and literary women not two days before! It was very extraordinary; but Granny must have her way. The children paid her affectionate duty, young madam did her half-grateful, half-vexed homage, the Vicar and Master Rowland deferred to her in her widowhood and dependence, and with little less grace and reverence than what she had taught them to practise when they were lads under tutelage. She was, in fact, the fully accredited mistress of Larks' Hall.

And Granny, in reality, presided at the vicarage;

not oppressively, for she was one of those sagacious magnates who are satisfied with the substance of power without loving its show. Notwithstanding, she prevented the publication of more than two calf-skin volumes at a time of the Vicar's sermons; she turned madam aside when she would have hung the parlour with gilt leather, in imitation of Foxholes; and she restricted the little girls to fresh ribbons once a month, and stomachers of their own working. And so, when Granny decreed that Mistress Betty was to be invited down to Mosely, there was no more question of the propriety of the measure than there would have been of an Act of Council given under the Tudors; the only things left to order were the airing of the best bedroom, the dusting of the ebony furniture, and the bleaching on the daisies of old madam's diamond quilt.

Down to Somersetshire went Mistress Betty, consoling cousin Ward with the gift of a bran new mantua and a promise of a speedy return, and braving those highwaymen who were for ever robbing King George's mail; but the long, light, *midsummer nights* were in their favour, and their

mounted escort had to encounter no paladins of the road in scarlet coats and feathered hats.

Mistress Betty's buoyant spirit rose with the fresh air, the green fields, and the sunshine. She was so obliging and entertaining to an invalid couple among her fellow-travellers, an orange nabob from India and his splendid wife, that they declared she had done them more good than they would derive from the Pump-room, the music, and the cards, to which they were bound. They asked her address, and pressed her to pay them a visit; when they would have certainly adopted her, and bequeathed to her their plum. As it was, half a dozen years later, when, to her remorse, she had clean forgotten their existence, they astounded her by leaving her a handsome legacy; which, with the consent of another party concerned—one who greatly relished the mere name of the bequest, as a proof that nobody could ever resist Lady Betty—she shared with a cross-grained grand-nephew whom the autocratic pair had cut off with a shilling.

VI.—BETWEEN MOSELY AND LARKS' HALL.

At Mosely Mistress Betty alighted at last, entered the wicket-gate, and approached the small, weather-stained, brick house. She made her curtsy to madam, asked the Vicar's blessing—though he was not twenty-five years her senior, and scarcely so wise—hugged the little girls, particularly sick Fiddy, and showered upon them pretty, tasteful town treasures, which little country girls, sick or well, dearly love. Fiddy's eyes were glancing already; but she did not leave off holding Mistress Betty's hand in order to try on her mittens, or to turn the handle of the musical-box. And Mistress Betty finally learned, with some panic and palpitation, which she was far too sensible and stately a woman to betray, that the Justice was not gone—that Master Rowland, in place of examining the newly-excavated Italian cities, or dabbling in state treason in France, was no further off than Larks' Hall, confined there with a sprained ankle: nobody being to blame, unless it were Granny, who had detained Master Rowland to the last moment, or

Uncle Rowland himself, for riding his horse too near the edge of a sandpit, and endangering his neck as well as his shin-bones. However, Mistress Betty did not cry out that she had been deceived, or screech distractedly, or swoon desperately (though the last was in her constitution), neither did she seem to be broken-hearted by the accident.

But Granny's reception of her was the great event of the day. Granny was a picture, in her gray gown and "clean white hood nicely plaited," seated in her wicker seat "fronting the south, and commanding the washing green." Here Granny was amusing herself picking gooseberries—which the notable Prissy was to convert into gooseberry-fool, one of the dishes projected to grace the town lady's supper—when Mistress Betty was led towards her.

It was always a trying moment when a stranger at Mosely was presented to old Madam Parnell. The Parnells had agreed, for one thing, that it would be most proper and judicious, as Mistress Betty had quitted the stage—doubtless in some disappointment of its capabilities, or condemnation of the mode in which it was conducted—to be chary

in theatrical allusions, to drop the theatrical sobriquet Lady Betty, and hail their guest with the utmost ceremony and sincerity as Mistress Lumley. But Granny turned upon her visitor a face still fresh, in its small, fine-furrowed compass, hailed her as Lady Betty on the spot, and emphatically expressed all the praise she had heard of her wonderful powers; regretting that she had not been in the way of witnessing them, and declaring that as they had escaped the snares and resisted the temptations of her high place, they did her the utmost honour, for they served to prove that her merits and her parts were equal. Actually, Granny behaved to Lady Betty as to a person of superior station, and persisted in rising and making room for the purpose of sharing with her the wicker seat; and there they sat, the old queen and the young.

Young madam had been quite determined that, as Uncle Rowland was so unfortunate as to be held by the foot at Larks' Hall from his tour, he should not risk his speedy recovery by hobbling over to Mosely, when she could go herself or send *Prissy* every morning to let him know how the

invalid was. But the very day after Mistress Betty's arrival old madam secretly despatched Tim the message-boy, to desire the squire to order out the old coach, and make a point of joining the family party either at dinner or at supper. Young madam was sufficiently chagrined; but then the actress and the squire met so coldly, and little Fiddy was flushing up into a quiver of animation, and Mistress Betty was such delightful company in the slumbrous country parsonage.

It is pleasant to think of the doings of the Parnells, the witcheries of Mistress Betty, and the despotism of old madam, during the next month. Indeed, Mistress Betty was so reverent, so charitable, so kind, so gentle as well as blithe under depressing influences, and so witty under stagnation, that it would have been hard to have lived in the same house with her and have been her enemy: she was so easily gratified, so easily interested; she could suit herself to so many phases of this marvellous human nature. She listened to the Vicar's "argument" with edification, and hunted up his authorities with diligence. She scoured young madam's lutestring, and made it

up in the latest and most elegant fashion of nightgowns, with fringes and buttons, such as our own little girls could 'match. She made hay with Prissy and Fiddy, and not only accomplished a finer cock than weak Fiddy and impatient Priss, but surpassed the regular haymakers. And she looked, oh! so well in her haymaker's jacket and straw hat—though young madam was always saying that her shape was too large for the dress, and that the slight hollows in her cheeks were exaggerated by the shade from the broad-brimmed flapping straw.

Of course Mistress Betty performed in the "Traveller" and "Cross Purposes," and gave riddles and sang songs round the hearth of a rainy evening, or about the cherry-wood table in the arbour of a cloudless twilight, much more pat than other people—that was to be looked for; but then she also played at love after supper, loo and cribbage for a penny the game—deeds in which she could have no original superiority and supremacy—with quite as infectious an enthusiasm.

To let you into a secret, young madam was in

horror at one time that Dick Ashbridge was wavering in his allegiance to her white rosebud, Fiddy; so enthralling was this scarlet pomegranate, this purple vine. But one evening Mrs. Betty turned suddenly upon the mad boy, to whom she had been very soft, saying that he bore a great resemblance to her cousin's second son Jack, and asked how old he was? and did he not think of taking another turn at college? This restored the boy to his senses in a trice, and she kissed Mistress Fiddy twice over when she bade her good-night.

But old madam and Lady Betty were the chief pair of friends. Granny, with her own sway in her day, and her own delicate discrimination, acute intellect, and quick feelings, was a great enough woman not to be jealous of a younger queen, but to enjoy her exceedingly. Madam Parnell had seen the great world as well as Lady Betty, and never tired of reviving old recollections, comparing experiences, and tracing the fates of the children and grandchildren of the great men and women her contemporaries. Prissy and Fiddy vowed over and over again, that the stirring details were more

entertaining than any story-book. For this reason, Granny took a personal pride in Lady Betty's simplest feat, as well as in her intellectual crown, and put her through every stage of her own particular recipes for cream cheese and pickled walnuts.

"The dickons!" cried a Somerset yeoman: "The Lon'on madam has opened the five-barred gate that beat all the other women's fingers, and gathered the finest elder-flowers, and caught the fattest chicken; and they tell me she has repeated verses to poor crazed Isaac, till she has lulled him into a fine sleep. 'Well done, Lon'on!' cries I; 'luck to the fine lady:' I never thought to wish success to such a kind." Granny, too, cried, "Well done, Lon'on! Luck to the fine lady!" If all Helens were but as pure, and true, and tender as Lady Betty!

Granny would have Lady Betty shown about among the neighbours, and maintained triumphantly that she read them, Sedleys, Ashbridges, and Harringtons, as if they were characters in a printed book—not that she looked down on them, *or disparaged* them in any way either: she was

far more tolerant than rash, inexperienced Prissy and Fiddy. And Granny ordered Lady Betty to be carried sight-seeing to Larks' Hall, and made minute arrangements for her to inspect Granny's old domain, from garret to cellar, from the lofty usher-tree at the gate to the lowly

“Plaintain ribbed that heals the reapers' wound”

in the herb-bed. No cursory inspection would suffice her: the pragmatistical housekeeper and the rosy milkmaids had time to give up their hearts to Lady Betty like the rest. Master Rowland, as in courtesy bound, limped with the stranger over his helmets and gauntlets, his wooden carvings, his black-letter distich; and, although she was not overflowing in her praises, she had seen other family pictures by Greuze, and she herself possessed a fan painted by Watteau, to which he was vastly welcome if he cared for such a broken toy.

She fancied the head of one of the Roman emperors to be like his Grace of Montague; she had a very lively though garbled familiarity with the histories of the veritable Brutus and Cassius,

Coriolanus, Cato, Alexander, and other mighty, picturesque, cobbled-up ancients, into whose mouths she could put appropriate speeches; and she accepted a loan of his 'Plutarch's Lives,' "to clear up her classics," as she said merrily: altogether poor Squire Rowland felt that he had feasted at an intellectual banquet.

At last it was time to think of redeeming her pledge to cousin Ward; and, to Mistress Betty's honour, the period came while Master Rowland was still too lame to leave Larks' Hall, except in his old coach, and while it yet wanted weeks to the softening, gladdening, overwhelming bounty of the harvest-home.

Then occurred the most singular episodes of perverseness and reiterated instances of inconsistency of which Granny had been found guilty in the memory of man, either as heiress of Larks' Hall or as old madam of the vicarage. At first she would not hear of Mistress Betty's departure, and asked her to be her companion, during her son's absence, in his house of Larks' Hall, where all at once she announced that she meant to take up *her temporary residence*. She did not approve of

its being committed entirely to the supervision of Mrs. Prue, her satellite, the schoolmaster's daughter who used so many long words in cataloguing her preserves and was so trustworthy: Mrs. Prue would feel lonesome; Mrs. Prue would take to gadding like the chits Prissy and Fiddy. No, she would remove herself for a year, and carry over her old man Morris along with her, and see that poor Rowley's goods were not wasted or his curiosities lost while he chose to tarry abroad.

Master Rowland stared, but made no objection to this invasion; Mrs. Betty, after much private rumination and great persuasion, consented to the arrangement. Young madam was obliged to be ruefully acquiescent, though secretly irate at so preposterous a scheme; the Vicar, good man, to do him justice, was always ponderously anxious to abet his mother, and had, besides, a sneaking kindness for Mistress Betty; the girls were privately charmed, and saw no end to the new element of breadth, brightness, and zest, in their little occupations and amusements.

When again, of a sudden, after the day was fixed

for Master Rowland's departure, and the whole family were assembled in the vicarage parlour—old madam fell a-crying and complaining that they were taking *her* son away from her—robbing her of him: she would never live to set eyes on him again—a poor old body of her years and trials would not survive another flitting. *She* had been fain to gratify some of his wishes; but see if they would not destroy them both, mother and son, by their stupid narrow-mindedness and obstinacy.

Such a thing had never happened before. Who had ever seen Granny unreasonable and foolish? The Vicar slipped his hand to her wrist, in expectation that he would detect signs of hay-fever, though it was a full month too late for the complaint—there had been cases in the village—and was shaken off with sufficient energy for his pains.

“Mother,” exclaimed Master Rowland, haughtily, “I understand you; but I had a plain answer to a plain question months ago, and I will have no reversal to please you. Pity craved by an old woman's weakness! favours granted in answer to tears drawn from dim eyes! I am not such a *slave!*”

The others were all clamouring round Granny, kissing her hand, kneeling on her footstool, imploring her to tell them what she wanted, what she would like best, what they could go and do for her; only the squire spoke in indignant displeasure, and nobody attended to him but Mistress Betty.

It did appear that the squire had been too fast in repelling advances which did not follow his mother's appeal. Mistress Betty gave no token—She stood pulling the strings of her cap, and growing first very red, and then ominously white, like any girl.

Perhaps the squire suspected that he had been too hasty, that he had not been grateful to his old mother, or generous to the woman who, however fine, and courted, and caressed, was susceptible of a simple woman's anguish at scorn or slight. Perhaps there flashed on his recollection a certain paper in the *Spectator*, wherein a young lady's secret inclination towards a young gentleman is conclusively revealed, not by her advances to save his pride, but by her silence, her blushes, her disposition to swoon with distress when an oppor-

nity is afforded her of putting herself forward to attract his notice—nay, when she is even urged to go so far as to solicit his regard.

Master Rowland's brow lightened as if a cloud wering there had suddenly cleared away—Master Rowland began to look as if it were a much more agreeable experience to contemplate Mistress Betty nervous and glum, than Lady Betty armed at a hundred points, and all but invulnerable—Master Rowland walked as alertly to her side as if there were no such things as sprains in this world. Madam, forgive me if I have attributed to you a weak complacency to which you would never condescend. Madam, if you have changed your mind, and can now tolerate my suit, and accord it the slightest return, I am at your feet."

Assuredly, the tall, vigorous, accomplished squire could have been there, not figuratively but in his imposing person. Family explanations were admissible a century and a half ago; public declarations were sometimes a point of honour; bodily prostration was by no means exploded; matter-of-fact squires knelt like romantic knights; Sir Charles Grandison and Sir Roger de Coverley bent

as low for their own purposes as fantastic gauze and tinsel troubadours.

But Mistress Betty prevented him. "I am not worth it, Master Rowland," cried Mistress Betty, sobbing and covering her face with her hands; and, as she could not have seen the obeisance, the gentleman intermitted it, pulled down the hands, kissed Madam Betty oftener than the one fair salute, and handed her across the room to receive Granny's blessing. Granny sat up and composed herself, and wished them joy (though she had the grace to look a little ashamed of herself), very much as if she had obtained her end.

There is no use in denying that young madam took to bed for three days, and was very pettish for a fortnight; but eventually she gave in to the match, and was not so much afflicted by it as she had expected, after the first brunt. Granny, in her age, was so absurdly set on the *mésalliance*, and so obliging and pleasant about everything else—the Vicar and the little lasses were so provokingly careless of the wrong done them and the injury to the family—that she knew very well, when her

back was turned, they formed as nonsensically hilarious a bridal party as if the wedding had concerned one of themselves and not the bachelor uncle, the squire of Larks' Hall. And Mistress Betty ordered down the smartest livery; and the highest gentry in Somersetshire would have consented to grace the ceremony, had she cared for their presence, such a prize was she in their country-houses when they could procure her countenance during their brief sojourn among sparkling rills and woodland shades. Altogether, young madam, in spite of her vanities and humours, loved the children, the Vicar, Granny, the bridegroom, and even (with a grudge) the bride, and was affected by the sweet summer season and the happy marriage-tide, and was, in the main, too good to prove a kill-joy.

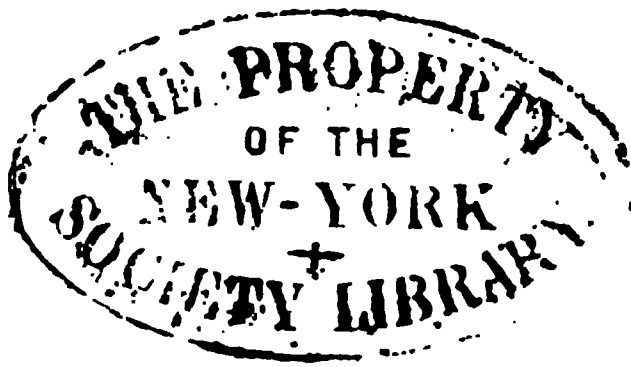
Master Rowland and Mistress Betty were married by Master Rowland's own brother in the Vicar's own church, with Fiddy and Prissy and the Sedleys for bridesmaids, and Dick Ashbridge for a groom's-man. Cousin Ward, brought all the way from town to represent the bride's relations, *was crying as if she were about to lose an only*

daughter. For Granny, she would not have shed one bright, crystal tear on any account; besides, she was over in state at Lark's Hall to welcome home the happy couple. Ah, well, they were all happy couples in those days!

At Larks' Hall Mistress Betty bloomed during many a year; for a fine woman knows no decay; she only passes from one stage of beauty and excellence to another, wearing, as her rightful possession, all hearts—her sons', as their father's before them. And Master Rowland no longer sat lonely in his hall, in the frosty winter dusk or under the usher-oak in the balmy summer twilight, but walked through life briskly and bravely, with a perfect mate; whom he had not failed to recognize as a real diamond among the bits of glass before the footlights—a diamond which his old mother had consented to set for him.

Our squire and Lady Betty are relics of a former generation. We have squires as manly by thousands, as accomplished by tens of thousands; but the inimitable union of simplicity and refinement, downrightness and dignity, disappeared with the last faint reflection of Sir Roger de Coverley.

And charming Lady Betty departed also with early hours, pillions, and cosmetics—that blending of nature and art, knowledge of the corrupt world and abiding true-heartedness, which then existed—a sort of marvel.



END OF VOL. I.

